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HB 151: Real Property – Residential Leases – Notification of Rent Increases

Hearing before the Judicial Proceedings Committee on March 28, 2023

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Public Justice Center (PJC) is a nonprofit public interest law firm that assists over 800 renters each year. We stand with tenants to protect and expand their rights to safe, habitable, affordable, and non-discriminatory housing. We support HB 151 with the amendments provided below. HB 151 as amended intends to provide tenants with at least 60 days’ notice – or 90 days’ notice for a tenancy over one month – when the landlord intends to increase the rent. Rents have skyrocketed since the start of the pandemic, [increasing over 19% in the Baltimore area alone](#), with similar increases around the state. Rapid rent increases destabilize families and result in evictions that can lead to homelessness and, short of homelessness, have significant collateral consequences such as forcing children to change school districts in the middle of the year, forcing families into unsafe or unhealthy housing due to lack of options, or losing a job that is no longer accessible by available transportation.

HB 151 in some sense codifies what is already the law as well as the current, standard business practice of landlords in Maryland. Unfortunately, HB 151 was amended in Environment and Transportation to also include an unrelated data reporting requirement on any local jurisdiction that enacts a rent stabilization law. This reporting requirement has nothing to do with HB 151’s primary purpose of providing tenants with adequate notice of the landlord’s proposal to increase the rent. Worse, the reporting requirement instructs *only* jurisdictions that enact rent stabilization laws to report on the number of housing permits issued before and after such laws are enacted. Thus, because the reporting requirement applies *only* to rent stabilization jurisdictions – and not all local jurisdictions – there is no “control” by which the impact of rent stabilization may be measured. That is, if you’re going to measure housing permits in a rent stabilization locality, you should also measure housing permits during the same time in non-rent stabilization surrounding localities. Otherwise, the data has no clear utility. Accordingly, we recommend that the bill be amended to require all local jurisdictions to report on the number of housing permits issued in the stated time periods. Or the Committee should strike the data reporting provisions entirely.

We urge the Committee to issue a **Favorable with Amendments** report on HB 151.