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**HB 151: Real Property – Residential Leases – Notification of Rent Increases  
HEARING BEFORE THE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE, MARCH 28, 2023  
POSITION: SUPPORT (FAV)**

The Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland (“PBRC”), an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the statewide coordinator, thought leader and clearinghouse for volunteer civil legal services in Maryland. As the designated pro bono arm of the Maryland State Bar Association, PBRC provides training, mentorship, and pro bono service opportunities to members of the private bar. We respond to acute legal needs identified in areas across the state by piloting and operating innovative pro bono service projects targeting specific legal problems or populations.

In May 2017, with a grant from the Maryland Judiciary’s Access to Justice Department, PBRC launched the **Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day (TVLD) Program** in Baltimore City Rent Court to provide day-of-court legal representation to tenants who appear unrepresented for their proceedings. Since then, this continually-expanding Program has allowed PBRC staff and volunteer attorneys to represent thousands of tenants in both Baltimore City and Baltimore County in multiple types of legal actions that could result in eviction. We have witnessed first-hand the difficulties tenants face when confronted with an unexpected rent increase.

**PBRC urges a favorable report on HB 151, which requires landlords to provide advance notice of a rent increase (60 – 90 days depending on the lease term).** Many of PBRC’s clients are low-income families who are experiencing financial difficulties. Usually this is due to common life circumstances such as illness, domestic violence, job loss, reduction in hours, or caregiving responsibilities for children, elderly, and disabled family members. Additionally, many of our clients are struggling with the lingering inflation brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Against the backdrop of these factors an unexpected rent increase could be devastating. HB 151 will provide a lifeline to these tenants.

Should the increase cause the rent to be unaffordable to the tenant, they may find themselves in a cycle of Failure to Pay Rent complaints in District Court. The mere filing of a Failure to Pay Rent case is a public record that can be seen by any prospective future landlord, which can impede a tenant’s ability to find appropriate affordable housing. Alternatively, with sufficient notice of an increase, a tenant can seek new housing and alleviate the possibility of the landlord filing one or more damaging cases and pursuing eviction. The landlord avoids the hassle and expense of going to court and the gains opportunity to secure another tenant who is able to afford the rent. By requiring advance notice of a rent increase and thus time for a tenant to plan accordingly, HB 151 represents a benefit to both parties to the transaction.

**PBRC supports HB 151 because it will ensure that Maryland renters are able to respond to rent increases in a sustainable way.**

For the above reasons,  
**PBRC urges a FAVORABLE report on HB 151.**  
Please contact Katie Davis, Director of PBRC’s Courtroom Advocacy Project, with any questions.  
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