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HB 693 – Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024
House Environment and Transportation Committee
FAVORABLE
February 20, 2024

Good afternoon, Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee. I am Priscilla Kania, AARP volunteer lead advocate and resident of Anne Arundel County. On behalf of over 850,000 members, we thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB 693 - Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024. We thank Governor Moore for initiating this important legislation.

HB 693 increases the surcharge for filing an eviction case from \$18 to \$93 and does not allow landlords to pass that on to the tenant. This is to make sure it is a deterrent for landlords to file frivolous cases. While this is a positive step, we do want to be mindful of the landlords who only have one tenant – usually someone living in their home or on their property, such as in a duplex or accessory dwelling unit (ADU).

Section 5-102 (A) of the bill establishes an Office to Tenant Rights. The office will be responsible in providing support and resources to tenants. This is excellent for renters and is likely to decrease unnecessary evictions.

Section 8-119 of the bill proposes to create a right of first refusal for tenant(s) to buy the property from the landlord, if it is up for sale. Before the landlord is allowed to sell it to a bonafide purchaser, the landlord must first offer the tenant/group of tenants the opportunity to buy the property. The bill requires that the landlord cannot ask more than 4% deposit (down payment) from the tenant if the tenant would like to buy the property. The Committee might want to consider changing that to the standard down payment rate at the time of purchase. While providing the first right of refusal to buy the property to the tenants is a good thing, there might be some consideration to make sure the process is like a standard sale of real estate transaction. The special treatment in relation to the deposit/financing clause can be provided to long term tenants (tenants who have lived there for more than five years).

Housing for Marylanders 50 and over and those who may be economically disadvantaged is a priority for AARP Maryland. Home ownership is all too often not an option for working class Marylanders and those on limited and or fixed incomes. When people pay over 30% of their income for rent, they often sacrifice necessities such as food and medicine. They rarely have a cushion for emergency expenses and can fall behind in their rental payments. We see landlords

raising rents at a remarkably high rate and evicting tenants to get higher rent from less disadvantaged tenants.

There are components to this bill and AARP Maryland appreciates and supports legislation like this that values both the landowners and the tenants, as well as appreciating the value of home ownership.

AARP Maryland is committed to working with you to effectively address Maryland's housing options for older adults. We ask the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 693. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Tammy Bresnahan at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.

Thank you.