



Committee: Environment and Transportation and Judiciary

Testimony on: HB693 – Renters’ Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024

Organization: The Jewish Community Relations Council, Howard County, MD

Submitting: Betsy Singer and Laura Salganik, Co-chairs

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 20, 2024

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County (JCRC) is submitting this testimony in support of HB538, the Renters’ Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024.

Jewish texts are full of material that balances the rights of renters and landlords and supports the rights of people to stay in their homes .

Maryland’s current eviction filing fee clearly puts renters at a large and unfair disadvantage. With the lowest eviction filing fee in the country – \$15 compared to a national average of over \$100 – filing for eviction is an inexpensive first step for landlords when rent is more than ten days late. But the ramifications for renters are anything but inexpensive. Even though the vast majority of renters who receive an eviction notice pay their rent before being evicted, they have to take time off work for court, pay court costs, and have an eviction filing on their record, which reduces their ability to find housing in the future.

According to The Eviction Lab, the eviction filing rate in Maryland was 70 percent: the number of eviction filings was 70 percent of the number of renter households. Many households received repeated filings. The national average was below 10 percent.

Raising the eviction filing fee to \$100, as proposed in this bill, puts Maryland in the same group as most other states, where eviction is a last resort not an initial course of action. In addition, other provisions in the law such as preventing landlords from passing on filing surcharges are a needed part of increasing the justice behind the eviction process.

Raising the fee also provides funding for important programs, including legal services for those facing eviction and increased funding for rental vouchers. We also support the bill’s provision to reduce the limit on security deposits from two to one month’s rent. Requiring three months’ rent (two for security deposit and one month rent) is an unreasonable burden to place on low-income residents.

We respectfully urge you to pass the Renters’ Rights and Housing Stabilization Act of 2024.