

SB481_JoShifrin_FAV

Date of Hearing: February 29, 2024

Jo Shifrin

Bethesda, MD 20817

TESTIMONY ON SB 481 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024

TO: Chair Will Smith, Vice Chair Jeff Waldstreicher and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, and
Chair Brian Feldman, Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

FROM: Jo Shifrin

My name is Jo Shifrin. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 481, Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024.

I have been a resident of District 16 for about 10 years. Jewish values inform my life and my advocacy. Having a home is one of the values most written about in Jewish texts. The need for a structure, a place to live with one's family, is critical for one's physical, emotional, and spiritual well being.

The Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024 will help those in Maryland who can not afford to own a home and must rely on the goodness of landlords to rent a place to live. This bill will:

- Limit the maximum amount of security deposit a landlord can charge to one month's rent
- It extends the time a tenant is given to pay back rent and late fees before after the Court makes a judgment of failure to pay rent in favor of the landlord
- Increases the lowest-in-the-nation filing fee that landlords must pay to the Court to initiate a judgment against a tenant for failure to pay rent or tenant holding over (also known as just cause eviction) from \$8 to \$93
- This will generate new funds that will be split between the Maryland Legal Services Corporation and funding for the Department of Housing and Community Development and other public housing agencies
- It will alter priorities for these housing agencies to focus financial assistance on families with young children or a pregnant individual.
- Establish an Office of Tenants' Right to ensure tenants have access to educational materials to exercise their rights; provide information so that tenants can report violations of their rights; provide information on how tenants can obtain financial counseling and

notify authorities when they are dealing with housing discrimination or other unfair or illegal housing practices and

- Give tenants the right of first refusal so that they may purchase the property

The net effect of the bill will be to lower Maryland's eviction filing rate, remove financial barriers to be housed, and create new pathways to homeownership, which will improve the economic stability of many Marylanders.

I strongly support this bill and respectfully urge both of these committees to return a favorable report on SB 481.