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TESTIMONY ON BILL SB0481 – Position: FAVORABLE
Renters Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Anna T. Levy

My name is Anna T. Levy, a resident of Rockville, MD, District 16. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB0481, Renters Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024.

Safe and stable housing has far reaching economic, health, and social benefits for individuals, families, and communities, and is key to reducing racial inequities. The home is a critical source of stability for individuals and families. It provides a nexus for social interactions for families, friends, and communities. We know from published research, including a recent analysis by the [Maryland Center for Economic Policy](#), and those of Matthew Desmond and Princeton's Eviction Lab, that the disruption resulting from evictions contributes to long term physical, psychological, educational, and economic damage that can condemn people to poverty and destabilize communities. We also know that evictions often cause continually growing debts that are often impossible for families to pay off, much less to get ahead of and ultimately achieve financial stability.

Evictions create significant costs for state and local government related to funding for shelter and education, as well as health care provided in hospitals instead of by community-based providers, transportation costs for homeless youth, and foster care. Notably, evictions have a disparate impact on Black and brown households in Maryland. Decreasing the number of evictions would help to reduce significant racial inequities and strengthen the financial status of individuals and our communities. Thus, we have an obligation to make sure that people can stay in their homes.

SB0481 addresses several issues that can help Maryland families move toward financial and housing stability and reduce the high rate of eviction filings in our state.

Reducing the maximum allowable security deposit from two, to one month's rent will remove a financial barrier for thousands of families. Additionally, many renters are unaware of their rights and responsibilities and of the services available to them. The creation of a new Office of Tenants' Rights will provide a central resource for renters to access this information in a timely way. Eviction data collected by the Office will help the state to develop better policies.

Maryland has one of the lowest court filing fees for evictions in the country. Increasing the court filing fee will help to deter serial eviction filings. It is imperative that the bill maintain the current language which does not allow the increased fee to be passed on to renters. Passing

on the fee would further jeopardize a renter's ability to pay off their owed rent and fees, especially when late fees are added on the amount owed, causing renters to fall even further behind and make eviction more probable. The additional fee should be an incentive to landlords to work with renters to put in place plans so that they are able to stay current on rent.

I respectfully urge a favorable report from the Committee in support of passage of SB0481.