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February 15, 2024

To: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Kira Wilpone-Welborn, Assistant Attorney General
Consumer Protection Division

Re: Senate Bill 644 – Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies -
Local Just Cause Termination Provisions (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General (the “Division”) supports Senate Bill 644 sponsored by Senators Muse, Carter, and Sydnor. Presently, pursuant to Real Property Article § 8-402, a landlord can elect to not renew a tenancy for any reason at the end of a residential lease term. Senate Bill 644 seeks to permit local jurisdictions the freedom to adopt local “just cause” policies that would require a landlord to have good cause before electing not to renew a tenancy and displacing the tenant from the rental unit and the community.

Just cause requirements for lease non-renewal reduce unexpected displacements, providing tenants with security in their residences and communities and allowing tenants to avoid financially expensive disruptions in their living, working, and schooling. As a result, the American Bar Association in its eviction policy guidelines has recognized the importance of just cause in eviction legislation and recommended that all states and localities adopt just cause principals in their residential lease and eviction laws.¹

¹ See https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_aid_indigent_defense/sclaid-task-force-on-eviction--housing-stability--and-equity/guidelines-eviction/guideline-9/.

Senate Bill 644 is tailored to permit local jurisdictions the flexibility to adopt housing policies that are beneficial to their residents and communities. For these reasons, the Division requests that the Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 644 a favorable report.

cc: The Honorable C. Anthony Muse
The Honorable Jill P. Carter
The Honorable Charles E. Sydnor, III
Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee