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**SB 162/HB 93**

**Landlord and Tenant - Termination of Residential Lease - Limitation of Liability for Rent  
HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE  
January 30, 2024  
POSITION: SUPPORT**

The Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland (“PBRC”), an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the statewide thought leader and clearinghouse for pro bono civil legal services in Maryland. As the designated pro bono arm of the MSBA, PBRC provides training, mentorship, and pro bono service opportunities to members of the private bar and offers direct legal services through free legal clinics to over 6,200 clients annually. **PBRC supports SB 162/HB 93 because vulnerable renters would benefit from limits on the liability they may incur when they must terminate a lease based upon health issues beyond their control.**

In May 2012, with a grant from the Maryland Judiciary’s Access to Justice Department, **PBRC launched a Consumer Protection Project (CPP) through which we assist low-income consumers who are summoned to the Affidavit Judgment docket in Baltimore City based upon an outstanding debt.** Subsequently, in 2017 **PBRC launched the Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day (TVLD) Program in Baltimore City Rent Court to provide day-of-court legal representation to tenants who appear unrepresented for their proceedings.** Through both of these projects, we have served thousands of individuals, all of whom have had to make difficult choices with real financial implications. Especially since the Pandemic, we have witnessed a rise in the number of clients whom we serve in our Consumer clinics whose debt is based upon unpaid rent, often stemming from leaving their home prior to the termination of their lease. For many of these clients, we can assess their situation to see if they have legitimate defenses against the alleged rent owed. Maryland law currently offers assistance for certain tenants by mitigating the debt they must incur when they are forced to move from their home before the end of a lease due to the physical mobility or need for additional care. However, the law does not offer similar benefits for tenants forced to move based upon other types of disabilities or mental disorders. This Bill would remedy that omission.

**Tenants living with disabilities and mental disorders the necessitate a move deserve the same treatment as tenants moving due to other physical limitations. For this reason, PBRC supports SB 162/HB 93.** Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

For the above reasons,

**PBRC urges a FAVORABLE report on SB 162/HB 93.**

Please contact Katherine Davis, Director of PBRC’s Courtroom Advocacy Project, with any questions.

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