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Anne Rosenthal
Baltimore, MD, 21211



THINK JEWISHLY. ACT LOCALLY.

TESTIMONY ON HB 767 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Real Property - Landlord and Tenant - Procedures for Failure to Pay Rent, Breach of Lease, and Tenant Holding Over (Tenant Possessions Recovery Act)

TO: Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Anne Rosenthal, on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

My name is Anne Rosenthal, and I am a resident of Baltimore City, in district 43A. On behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ), I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 767, the Tenant Possessions Recovery Act. JUFJ organizes over 6,000 Jewish Marylanders and allies in support of local campaigns for social, racial, and economic justice.

Beyond classifying housing as a human right, Jewish texts identify the responsibility of landlords and governments to respect and protect renters' rights. Jewish values also steer us to pay special attention to our most vulnerable neighbors, and to protect items of value to others, even if they have no value to us. Unfortunately – running contrary to this principle, current Maryland law allows landlords to dispose of a tenant's property however they wish when law enforcement executes a warrant of restitution as part of the eviction process.

Through graduate school in public health and several years of experience working in Baltimore City Public Schools, I have observed – both in the research and in reality – the trauma caused by eviction and loss of possessions. I have also seen this trauma manifest throughout my volunteer work with refugees resettled in Baltimore. One family who spent years in refugee camps far from their war-torn homeland ultimately landed in a rental home in East Baltimore. This family had been able to ferry precious belongings out of their homeland, from camp to camp, and finally across an ocean. Now, though, in our own city, they faced the prospect of losing all these belongings – on top of their home – when their landlord threatened eviction. What good could come of their three young children losing their English workbooks, their two

teenagers losing the backpacks teachers had gifted them, and the mom of the family losing her new workplace badge and precious documents hauled from overseas?

The Tenant Possessions Recovery Act would put a stop to devastating losses like these. It would require 14-day notice of a scheduled eviction and would establish a 10-day period during which a tenant could reclaim personal possessions before the landlord disposes of them. 46 other states have already passed bills with at least one of these two key components. If Maryland aims to be a state where all families can thrive, how can we allow evictions to strip renters of all they need merely to survive?

On behalf of JUFJ, I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB767, the Tenant Possessions Recovery Act.