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TESTIMONY ON SB 651 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)

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

FROM: Deedee Jacobsohn, on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

My name is Deedee Jacobsohn and I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 651, Good Cause Eviction enabling legislation, on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ). JUFJ organizes over 6,000 Jewish Marylanders and allies in support of local campaigns for social, racial, and economic justice.

The home is the heart of many aspects of Jewish life, and perhaps because of this, Jewish law requires that we keep everyone housed. The book of Deuteronomy states: if there is a needy person among you, “you must open your hand and lend whatever is sufficient to meet the need [15:8].” The Talmud, the source of Jewish Rabbinic law, interprets the line “sufficient for the need” as providing a house (Ketubot, 67b). The Talmud also includes many laws defining the minimum requirements for safe and stable housing, including limits on when a tenant can be evicted. **The idea of permitting a landlord to arbitrarily refuse to renew a lease and cause tenants to be evicted is anathema to Jewish values, and to the fundamental right to housing.**

In my advocacy work with JUFJ, I have heard from many people—especially immigrant women—who were threatened with eviction. The reasons for said threats? Organizing their neighbors into a tenant union, protesting the substandard housing conditions in their apartments, enriching their community by establishing food hubs, or arranging transportation to their kids’ extracurricular activities. Many tenants who did not have their lease renewed and were compelled to move or face eviction for ‘holding over’ could not even say why it happened, much less fight to prevent it. These people work hard to advocate for their community to have

stable, dependable homes. Yet they live with the constant fear of losing their home and the connections they've built in their schools and neighborhoods due to Maryland's eviction laws.

I recently saw a comment on social media that read something like, 'so do we let tenants stay in their apartments forever just because they're paying rent?' My response is a resounding yes. A stable home is central to a stable community. Let's take the insecurity and fear out of renting, and enable counties to legislate 'good cause' eviction protections.

On behalf of Jews United for Justice, I respectfully but strongly urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB 651.