



TESTIMONY FOR SB0046
Criminal Law – Fraud – Possession of Residential Real Property

Bill Sponsor: Senator Watson

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0046 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Can you imagine being evicted from your own home? Home title theft is on the rise. What happens is that the thief forges phony documents to record a transfer of property ownership. Then, they often re-sell the home or rent it to other people. Trying to unravel this scheme and get your house back, and evict people who are now squatting in your home, is very difficult and time-consuming.

This bill would apply penalties to the perpetrator based on the number of violations, starting at a \$500 fine and 90 days in jail to a \$2,500 fine and up to 1 year in jail. It also allows the true owner of the property to submit an affidavit of stating that the thief is fraudulently in possession of the property and ensures that the true will not be evicted from their own property.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee