Hearing: February 11, 2025
Jo Shifrin
Bethesda, MD 20817

TESTIMONY ON SB# 609   - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Residential Leases – Use of Algorithmic Device by Landlord to Determine Rent – Prohibition

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

FROM: Jo Shifrin

OPENING: My name is Jo Shifrin. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB# 609, Residential Leases – Use of Algorithmic Device by Landlord to Determine Rent – Prohibition.

I've been a resident of Montgomery County for the past 10 years. In that time, I have seen both a housing shortage and a continuing escalation in the price of housing. My support for this legislation comes from my grounding in Jewish values. Among these values are *Tikkun Olam,* an obligation to make the world a more fair and equitable place for people to live; and *Dei Machsoro,* an obligation to make sure that everyone has what they need to live and thrive. The need for housing is central to Jewish thought.

A technology-based services company, Real Page, Inc., which works with commercial real estate owners and property managers, apparently colluded with six of the largest residential landlords in Maryland to use the landlords' non-public competitor data to determine how high the landlords could inflate the price of rents.   Not only is this a deceptive trade practice, but it makes the housing crisis in Maryland worse: it exploits the people who can least afford exorbitant rents and leads to greater housing insecurity and homelessness than there might otherwise be.

With the passage of this bill, landlords will think twice about using algorithmic devices and, hopefully, rental prices won't increase as much as they have in the past.

 I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB# 609.