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## **SB 107: Evidence - Interception of Oral Communications - Fair Housing Testing**

**Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee on January 13, 2025**

**Position: SUPPORT (FAV)**

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The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a nonprofit public interest law firm that stands with tenants to protect and expand their rights to safe, habitable, affordable, and non-discriminatory housing and their rights to fair and equal treatment by Maryland's landlord-tenant laws, courts, and agencies. The PJC actively works towards instigating systemic changes to establish a society founded on justice. Our focus is on utilizing legal avenues to remove barriers that impede economic and racial equity, through our various projects. PJC seeks the Committee's **Favorable report on SB 107** as this allows tenants easier access to safe and stable housing and also promotes racial equity.

**SB 107**, which seeks to authorize fair housing testers to legally intercept communications under specific conditions, is much needed legislation that would allow Maryland to enforce our fair housing laws. Maryland has robust fair housing laws that were passed to hold landlords accountable for unfair and illegal practices. This bill would allow the state to actually enforce these laws.

By authorizing fair housing testers to lawfully intercept communications, **SB 107** would offer a vital instrument for identifying and confronting covert discrimination that restricts access to safe, affordable, and quality housing in Maryland. Furthermore, this legislation incentivizes property managers to place greater emphasis on fair housing training, ensuring their staff are well-versed in legal compliance and best practices. This proactive approach in management fosters a more informed and equitable housing market, directly contributing to enhanced housing stability and the economic growth of Maryland families. Access to stable housing is a cornerstone for the well-being and economic advancement of families, and this bill could play a critical role in ensuring such access.

The essence of **SB 107** is in alignment with the objectives of the PJC. It provides a substantial legal framework to reinforce our endeavors in ensuring fair housing practices. This bill passage would be key to ensure fairness and equality in housing, which is central to the PJC's mission of promoting economic and racial justice.

Public Justice Center **supports SB 107** as it would take essential steps to protect renters' privacy, allow easier access to safe and stable housing, and promote racial justice.

Public Justice Center is a member of the Renters United Maryland coalition and asks that the Committee issue a **FAVORABLE report on SB 107**. If you have any questions, please contact Albert Turner, Esq., [turnera@publicjustice.org](mailto:turnera@publicjustice.org) (410) 625-9409 Ext. 250.