

TESTIMONY

My name is Jessica Legette **and I am asking for an unfavorable report on HB 154.** I am a Baltimore City resident and a mother of 3. During the pandemic, I asked my landlord to fix some lead issues that were on the property. Instead, the landlord retaliated against me and kicked me out. I was left to scramble for a new place to live. Moving in a short period of time put my family in a tight spot financially. I was so relieved when I found a place within my budget, especially because the landlord told me I could move in right away.

Unfortunately, this was only the beginning of my trauma. Right after moving in, random individuals started coming to my place, saying they owned the property and wanted me to leave. None of them told me who they were or showed me any proof or paperwork. It was a scary and confusing time. I did not know who to trust. I realized that the person who rented me the house never owned it and had scammed me out of a few thousand dollars.

It will take a long time for my family to recover from the anguish we experienced during this time. My kids are suffering at school. My oldest can't sleep through the night. I have been diagnosed with PTSD.

The only thing that helped was getting legal advice that assured me that I had a right to a court process. This helped me understand that the aggressive strangers who kept coming to my door weren't entitled to throw me out at any moment. I soon faced a wrongful detainer case. The actual owner had to prove who he was, and the court process allowed me to understand how much time I had before I would have to move out. The Judge gave me some clarity about what was going on and little time to move out. That little time was crucial for me.

For the company that owned this property and many others, the house was an investment to be checked on every couple of months. For me, it was a home that would help my family get stable again. I never intended to squat in someone else's property. The city had issued this property a vacant building notice years before. I wish the owner had boarded it up like the city ordered in 2022. Then, I never would have fallen victim to this scam.

If HB 154 had passed, a Sheriff would have kicked me out into the streets without any time to gather my belongings or find alternative housing. That is terrifying. **We should not be punishing victims such as myself.**