



TESTIMONY FOR HB0313
Landlord and Tenant – Residential Housing – Rental Applications and Tenant Screening

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Stewart

Committee: Economic Matters

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0313 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.

Signing a rental lease is quite a financial obligation and the rental market in Maryland is tight. Many rentals require an application fee and/or a screening fee before a person can be considered. Even with the rental fee and/or screening fee, a person can then be denied the rental. There is a lot that can happen between providing the fee(s) and being able to sign a lease and much of it is opaque.

This bill would require the landlord to provide in writing before the acceptance of a rental or screening fee:

- the information that would be included in a tenant screening report
- the criteria that may result in a denial or conditional acceptance of a rental application
- the name and contact information of any consumer reporting agency or tenant screening service used by the landlord to obtain a tenant screening report
- the maximum amount that may be charged for an application fee

If, after accepting the rental or screening fee, the landlord then denies the applicant the rental, the landlord must provide in writing:

- the specific reasons for the denial
- an affirmation that the landlord did not consider any proceeding or shielded record of the applicant
- the screening report or other information the landlord relied on in considering the prospective tenant
- a copy of any screening report used by the landlord in reaching a determination

The applicant would then have the ability to appeal the denial.

The bill also prohibits the landlord from requiring or coercing the applicant to let them know if there are any shielded records or proceedings that the applicant is involved in or to try to uncover that information through other means. There are civil penalties for the landlord if they do not comply with these requirements and there is also injunctive relief for the applicant. This would make the process of renting more of an arms-length transaction and less of an arbitrary and opaque process.

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