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**HB 313 - Landlord and Tenant – Residential Housing – Rental Applications and Tenant Screening**  
**House Economic Matters Committee**  
**Feb. 5, 2026**  
**Position: Favorable**

The Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland (“PBRC”), an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the statewide thought leader and clearinghouse for pro bono civil legal services in Maryland. As the designated pro bono arm of the MSBA, PBRC provides training, mentorship, and pro bono service opportunities to members of the private bar and offers direct legal services to over 5,000 clients annually.

In May 2017, with a grant from the Maryland Judiciary’s Access to Justice Department, PBRC launched the **Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day (TVLD) Program, now the Tenant Justice Program (TJP)** in Baltimore City Rent Court to provide day-of-court legal representation to tenants who appear unrepresented for their proceedings. Since then, this continually expanding Program has allowed PBRC staff and volunteer attorneys to represent thousands of low-income tenants in both Baltimore City and Baltimore County in multiple types of legal actions that could result in eviction.

In addition to providing legal representation for low-income tenants facing eviction actions or dealing with dangerous conditions in their home, PBRC also provides assistance to our clients after court to help ensure long-term housing stability. For clients who will be evicted or have dangerous conditions in their home that cannot be remedied by the landlord, we often support clients in their search for alternate affordable housing. Through this process we have witnessed the excessive burdens placed on tenants, especially low-income tenants, as they search for housing. We have seen clients pay application fees to numerous apartments only to be turned down without any explanation or told that there are no units available. We often hear from clients that they don’t understand why they were denied because they make enough money to cover the rent. Without an explanation, they can’t dispute the finding which could be based on an inaccurate credit report or records that should have been shielded, or the result of a child support payment that wasn’t recorded. This makes an already difficult process even more stressful, expensive, and unpredictable.

HB 313 is a great step to addressing these issues. HB 313 prohibits landlords from accepting application fees unless a unit is actually available (or will be within 30 days) and requires landlords, before accepting a rental application fee, to explain to tenants in writing what information will be accessed in a tenant screening report. If a tenant is denied or offered conditional acceptance, the landlord must explain to the rental applicant in writing why they were denied and must include a copy of the report used to make the determination. In addition, HB 313 also prohibits the use of shielded, sealed, or suppressed eviction records as a reason for denial of tenancy.

Thus HB 313 will ensure that a prospective renter will know before they pay an application fee exactly what the landlord will use to qualify them for tenancy and will ensure that the landlord is using ACCURATE information when evaluating the renter. No more will renters be denied housing because of an inaccurate credit score, because of a case that was shielded or expunged, or because they did not have the opportunity to correct a mistaken application denial.

Further, HB 313 does NOT prohibit landlords from continuing to use tenant screening reports from screening companies. Instead, it ensures that applicants receive copies of these existing reports so they can identify any errors that need to be corrected or understand which aspects of their application need improvement before unnecessarily applying to another rental property. HB 313, gives prospective tenants the transparency and predictability they deserve in a rental application process increasingly dictated by black-box algorithms with no backstop to inaccurate reporting.

PBRC urges a favorable report on HB 313 as a common-sense bill that will help clients like ours make informed housing decisions and prohibit unnecessary and unfair denials, thus allowing them to preserve their limited application funds for homes they have a chance of securing.

For the above reasons,

**PBRC urges a FAVORABLE report on HB 313.**

Please contact Katie Davis, Director of PBRC's Courtroom Advocacy Project, with any questions.

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