



**Columbia
Housing
Center**

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 313
Tenant Screening Transparency Act of 2026**

**Before the House Economic Matters Committee
Maryland General Assembly**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jessamine Duvall, and I am the Executive Director of Columbia Housing Center, a nonprofit organization based in Howard County that works to expand access to safe, stable, and affordable housing through direct assistance, education, and policy advocacy. I am writing in strong support of House Bill 313.

HB 313 brings much-needed transparency and fairness to a rental application process that has become increasingly opaque, expensive, and difficult for prospective tenants to navigate. Tenant screening reports now play an outsized role in housing decisions, yet applicants are often required to pay significant fees without knowing what information will be reviewed, what standards will be applied, or why they were ultimately denied.

Through our housing stabilization and Voucher to Keys programs, we routinely work with households who submit dozens of applications—paying repeated application and screening fees—only to be denied with little or no explanation. In many cases, these denials are based on screening reports that contain errors, rely on sealed or shielded eviction records, or apply automated decision-making that does not meaningfully reflect a household's ability to pay rent.

HB 313 addresses these problems in a balanced and practical way. The bill does not prohibit tenant screening or require landlords to disclose proprietary algorithms. Instead, it ensures that landlords clearly communicate screening criteria upfront, provide applicants with the specific reasons for denial or conditional acceptance, and share the screening report used to make that decision. It also reinforces existing public policy by prohibiting the use of shielded, sealed, or suppressed eviction records—information that the law has already deemed inappropriate for public use.

These protections benefit tenants and landlords alike. Transparency helps applicants make informed decisions about where to apply, reduces unnecessary application costs, and allows errors to be identified and corrected. For landlords, clearer communication and reliance on lawful, relevant information reduces disputes, complaints, and exposure to fair housing and consumer protection liability.

HB 313 promotes predictability, accountability, and trust in Maryland's rental housing market without imposing undue burdens on housing providers. For these reasons, Columbia Housing Center respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 313.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessamine Duvall
Executive Director
Columbia Housing Center