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CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION
HOUSING UNIT**

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February 24, 2026

To: The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama
Chair, Economic Matters Committee

From: Kira Wilpone-Welborn, Assistant Attorney General
Consumer Protection Division

Re: House Bill 59 – Real Property - Expedited Wrongful Detainer Proceedings - Property for
Sale or Lease (OPPOSE)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General (the “Division”) opposes House Bill 59 sponsored by Delegate Jackie Addison. House Bill 59 seeks to further expedite wrongful detainer proceedings if the property was listed for sale or lease at the time of the wrongful detainer filing. This bill seeks to address concerns with individuals unlawfully occupying a property (*i.e.* squatters) by expediting wrongful detainer proceedings. However, there is no evidence or data that suggests further expediting this process again after the General Assembly’s actions last session is necessary to restore possession. Instead, House Bill 59 proposes a solution to an unquantified “problem” and unnecessarily sweeps lawful occupants into eviction proceedings without adequate notice and opportunity to prepare and present a defense. Thus, House Bill 59 presents multiple opportunities for unscrupulous actors to evict lawful occupants despite the absence of evidence that the “\problem” that this bill seeks to address actually exists.

Last session, the General Assembly addressed concerns about squatters and enacted legislation to expedite wrongful detainer proceedings after thoughtful considerations of notice, due process, and the practical ability to expedite these proceedings. The General Assembly’s changes to Real Property § 14-132 went into effect on October 1, 2025. As such, these changes have been in place for less than 4 months, which has simply not provided enough time to evaluate whether further changes are needed.

Additionally, this bill creates an expedited wrongful detainer proceeding and appeal if a property was listed for sale or lease at the time of the eviction filing, a proposal considered and rejected last session. If all that is required of an owner or manager to access an expedited eviction process is listing the property with, or without, the intent to transfer the property, this bill could result in the abuse of these expedited proceedings. For example, an owner of a unit that was acquired through tax sale or foreclosure could list the property for sale or lease and seek the expedited removal of lawful occupants, in as little as nine days, without an intention to transfer the property—a scenario that the Baltimore Banner has recently reported on.¹

Moreover, although the bill suggests that the complaint should be served in person, the reality is that the majority of wrongful detainer actions are filed against “all occupants” and not against named individuals. As a result, under the proposed bill, notices of the hearing which will just be days away will be served by mere posting at the property. Posting of a hearing notice within just a few days does not provide adequate time for lawful occupants to take off work, find childcare, seek attorney representation and gather evidence necessary to defend their continued occupation of their homes.

Finally, the bill requires the court to issue a warrant of restitution within 24 hours of the court hearing and for the sheriff to immediately execute the warrant, removing the occupants from the property. Also concerning is the fact that the 24-hour issuance of the warrant and immediate execution by the sheriff could occur before the appeal period has lapsed; thus, evicting residents before the appropriate judicial review has occurred.

While wrongful detainer proceedings are meant to restore possession to the owner, equity interests for lawful tenants and occupants victimized by fraudsters should be balanced with the swift restoration of possession, a balance reached by the General Assembly last session. House Bill 59, without evidence that the General Assembly’s alterations to the wrongful detainer process last session are insufficient, unnecessarily expedites wrongful detainer proceedings and could impinge on the rights of occupants in these properties. Accordingly, the Division requests that the Economic Matters Committee give House Bill 59 an unfavorable report.

cc: The Honorable Jackie Addison
Members, Economic Matters Committee

¹ See “They are accused of squatting. Lawmakers want them out.” Hallie Miller, <https://www.thebanner.com/community/housing/maryland-squatting-bills-general-assembly-PJLK7YXPHBATPK54WTBVJXVDBI/>