

Written & Virtual Testimony

Bill Title: HB313 Landlord and Tenant - Residential Housing - Rental Applications and Tenant Screening

Position: Favorable

Date: March 31, 2026

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Tenika Gilliam

Dear Chair Smith and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee -

My name is Tenika Gilliam, I am a Marylander and I am here to strongly support HB313.

I am speaking from lived experience. I have spent years trying to secure stable housing for myself and my children, and what I went through should not happen to anyone.

At one point in Hartford County, I applied to nearly 20 different landlords. Each application required fees - money I could not afford to lose. For a period of time I even had a Housing Voucher, but no one would rent to me.

No one told me why - I had to guess that I must not be meeting a credit score criteria.

During this time, my children and I were going from place to place, sometimes staying in hotels when I could afford it, and other times living in my car. This went on for over a year. My children struggled in school, and I was doing everything I could to hold our lives together.

I was receiving Social Security income to help pay rent, but still, no one would rent to me.

That was more than frustrating - it was humiliating. I felt stripped of my dignity.

Landlords hold a tremendous amount of power in this process. Without accountability, applicants are left in the dark - paying fees, facing rejection, and never knowing why. This bill creates basic fairness:

- It prevents landlords from collecting application fees when no units are actually available.
- It ensures applicants understand screening criteria before applying.
- It requires landlords to explain their decisions and share the reports they rely on.

These are simple, reasonable protections.

I urge you to support this bill so that families like mine are not forced to endure the same hardship just to find a place to live.

Sincerely,

Tenika Gilliam