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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS OF HBI312/SB910
COVID-19 Eviction and Housing Relief Act of 2021

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the Judiciary Committee
FROM: Dan Richman

My name is Dan Richman. I live in Baltimore in District 46. This testimony is in support of HBI312/SB910, the COVID-19 Eviction and Housing Relief Act of 2021.

From the beginning of the pandemic, I was concerned that our state's protection of my vulnerable neighbors was insufficient. I tried working with volunteers from my neighborhood association and other local groups to urge the Governor to take stronger measures for eviction prevention. But through to the present day, the measures have not been strong enough and now that the legislature is in session we need action.

In the neighborhoods of east and southeast Baltimore that I'm familiar with, the signs of housing crises and financial desperation have noticeably increased over the last few months. Furniture and other household items dumped on streets and in alleys is a sign of evictions, and I have seen more of this in the last few months than I've seen in years. Upkeep of homes and blocks has slipped as renters and homeowners struggle to make ends meet. There has been an explosion of the predatory and illegally posted "we buy houses" signs.

If these indicators of suffering seem familiar it's because they fit the pattern in Baltimore of Black livelihoods and families being destroyed and exploited, and neighborhoods collapsing, because of repeated policies of segregation, and most recently by subprime lending. This cycle will repeat if we do not protect people, especially Black and brown families, from housing-related financial ruin throughout and following this pandemic.

I respectfully urge a favorable report for HBI312/SB910.