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PARLIAMENTARIAN

Ways and Means Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 17, 2021

House Bill 1312 COVID-19 Eviction and Housing Relief Act of 2021

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to present **House Bill 1312 COVID-19 Eviction and Housing Relief Act of 2021**, which creates emergency renter and homeowner protections for tenants and landlords negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Across the country, people are facing unprecedented rates of unemployment, food and housing insecurity, and health challenges, matched with uncertainty about the future economy and job prospects. Over 2,500 Marylanders have been evicted since July 2020 and many residents fear a wave of evictions when state and federal moratoria end.

HB 1312 is comprehensive housing legislation that would help keep renters housed during the pandemic and in the aftermath of the crisis. The bill includes a number of critical provisions, such as banning rent increases and late fees, preventing landlords from filing complaints for failure to pay rent if the tenant owes less than \$600 of unpaid rent, requiring more dynamic eviction data; strengthening requirements for written eviction notices; and providing tenants with up-to-date information on their legal rights published from the Department of Housing and Community Development and Maryland Judiciary and distributed by landlords. Finally, the bill creates a Housing Relief Fund to provide financial support to landlords and renters. **I am including an amendment to clarify the purposes for which grant funds can be used.**

As part of the 2021 Housing Justice Package, I join my colleagues in calling for the protection of vulnerable landlords and tenants who are at risk for losing their homes and jobs as a result of the pandemic. Housing is a human right, and we must take every action necessary to keep people in their homes. For this reason, I urge the committee to give a **favorable report** for **House Bill 1312**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jheanelle Wilkins".

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins,