

BRIAN E. FROSH
Attorney General

ELIZABETH F. HARRIS
Chief Deputy Attorney General

CAROLYN QUATTROCKI
Deputy Attorney General



WILLIAM D. GRUHN
Chief
Consumer Protection Division

Writer's Fax No.

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION

Writer's Direct Dial No.
410-576-6986
kwilponewelborn@oag.state.md.us

February 18, 2022

To: The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

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

Re: House Bill 674 – Landlord and Tenant - Stay of Eviction Proceeding for Rental
Assistance Determination (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General (the “Division”) supports House Bill 674 sponsored by Delegate Vaughn Stewart, *et al.*, which would assist the collective efforts of state and federal leaders to stymy the disruptive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on renter households.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to financially impact renters resulting in housing instability for renter households across Maryland. Through the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan, the federal government has awarded Maryland over \$250 million dollars in rental assistance and eviction prevention funds.¹ Notwithstanding, the Division has received repeated complaints from consumers, advocates, and rental assistance program administrators that many Maryland landlords are refusing to provide the information necessary for tenants to complete applications for rental relief assistance or to accept rental assistance funds awarded to eligible renters. Instead, many Maryland landlords are filing failure to pay rent actions seeking to evict vulnerable renters who have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic from their housing. House Bill 674 will assist rental relief assistance providers in successfully distributing Maryland’s share of the federal rental assistance funds and bolster housing stability for Maryland renter households as the COVID-19 pandemic’s deleterious effects persist.

Accordingly, the Division requests that the Judicial Proceedings Committee give House Bill 674 a favorable report.

¹See <https://governor.maryland.gov/2021/03/17/governor-hogan-submits-1-08-billion-supplemental-budget-focused-on-rental-assistance-higher-education-and-transportation/>.

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
House Bill 674
February 18, 2022
Page Two

cc: The Honorable Vaughn Stewart *et al.*
Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee