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February 4, 2022

To: The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, Judiciary Committee

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

Re: House Bill 367 – Landlord and Tenant – Repossession for Failure to Pay Rent – Rental Assistance Programs (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General (the “Division”) supports House Bill 367 sponsored by Delegates Nicole A. Williams, *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 is continuing 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. House Bill 367 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 Environment and Transportation Committee give House Bill 367 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/>.

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cc: The Honorable Nicole A. Williams, *et al.*
Members, Environment and Transportation Committee