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THINK JEWISHLY. ACT LOCALLY.

TESTIMONY ON SB223/HB298 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Landlord and Tenant - Eviction Actions - Filing Surcharge and Prohibited Lease Provisions

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Molly Amster, on behalf of Jews United for Justice

My name is Molly Amster. I am a resident of District 43 and am the Maryland Policy Director and Baltimore Director for Jews United for Justice (JUFJ). **I am submitting this testimony on behalf of JUFJ in support of SB223/HB298, Landlord and Tenant - Eviction Actions - Filing Surcharge and Prohibited Lease Provisions.** JUFJ organizes 6,000 Jews and allies from across Maryland in support of local social, racial, and economic justice campaigns.

Jewish sacred texts recognize that having safe, stable housing is key to a healthy society, and we know that it is key to reducing racial inequities. These texts have taken on even more urgency in the past two years: all people should be able to stay in their homes, especially during a pandemic.

While we support SB223/HB298 as drafted, if the bill is amended to allow landlords or the court to pass on the \$65 increase to the tenant under any circumstances, the purpose of the bill is eviscerated. There would no longer be any disincentive for the landlord to file an eviction action if the landlord or the court can pass that surcharge onto the tenant. Further, renters who are trying to scrape together enough money to pay their rent and late fees to stay in their homes would then have to come up with an additional amount to avoid eviction, leading to more evictions. **Our organization and Renters United Maryland would vocally oppose any surcharge increase in which that surcharge may be passed onto the tenant under any circumstances.**

On behalf of JUFJ, I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB223/HB298.