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THINK JEWISHLY. ACT LOCALLY.

**TESTIMONY ON HB0036 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**  
**Real Property-Actions to Repossess-Proof of Rental Licensure**

**TO:** Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and members of the Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Anna T. Levy on behalf of Jews United for Justice

My name is Anna T. Levy. I am a resident of District 16. On behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ), I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0036, Real Property - Actions to Repossess - Proof of Rental Licensure. JUFJ organizes 6,000 Jews and allies from across Maryland in support of social, racial, and economic justice campaigns. JUFJ is a member of Renters United Maryland, a statewide coalition working to advance the rights of all tenants to safe, affordable, and stable housing.

Jewish tradition teaches us that we have an obligation to ensure fairness in tenant/landlord law, to ensure safe living conditions, and to prevent homelessness. The Book of Lamentations compares homelessness to the loss of a parent or spouse. Without a home, there is no foundation for all other parts of a person's life and everything is at risk. Moreover, we differentiate between the definition of a temporary vs permanent home, including that a permanent home should be sturdy, should not have holes in the roof and should fully shield a person from the elements (*Mishnah, Sukkah 2:9*). Access to safe and stable housing has far reaching economic, health, and social benefits to individuals, families, and communities, and is key to reducing racial inequities. Renters routinely have little agency when faced with threats to maintaining stable housing.

Local rental licensing laws are meant to protect public health and safety and most landlords comply with those laws. However, unlicensed landlords can avoid complying with licensing laws, often refusing to make critical repairs to address health and safety hazards, while raising rents. Although landlords must be licensed, where required, to file suit in Maryland courts, a loophole allows unlicensed landlords to use the streamlined eviction process to evict tenants based on the Tenant Holding Over (THO) clause. Perhaps consequently, the number of THO filings has risen 116% from FY2018 to FY2022. In 2022, the Legislature recognized this loophole and passed HB0703/SB0563, which was written in agreement with Maryland Multi-Housing Association, but vetoed by Governor Hogan. That bill is identical to the proposed bill, HB0036.

How many evictions might have been prevented if this bill had been put in place in 2022? How many tenants would be living in safe homes because they would not have had to fear retribution for complaining about intolerable conditions? No landlord should be incentivized to operate without conforming to the law.

**On behalf of Jews United for Justice, I thank you for the opportunity to share our position, for passing this legislation last year, and respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0036.**