

**SB0992 – Real Property - Landlord and Tenant - Procedures for Failure to Pay Rent,
Breach of Lease, and Tenant Holding Over
Hearing before the Environment & Transportation Committee on March 7, 2024**

Position: FAVORABLE

I am urging the committee to support SB0992 (cross-filed with HB1114) as a tool to help keep families in their homes, prevent long-lasting trauma, and stop the cycle of multigenerational poverty. Above all, this bill is smart and enables a process to effectively utilize existing resources and funds to help keep more people in our community housed.

Working in the field of services for people experiencing homelessness for over 7 years, I see the aftermath of eviction and its impact on families and children. This legislation will make a difference in the lives of those at risk of homelessness and the community that supports our most vulnerable population.

The eviction rate is past 2019 statistics, with about 80 households being evicted a day in Maryland. In 2023, the rate of children experiencing homelessness more than doubled to 111,000. Often, our local non-profits, community agencies, and schools are left with helping to pick up the pieces of a life torn apart. Every time a family is evicted, they start from ground zero. Especially for the children involved, losing their cherished items, seeing them strewn about like trash is tragic, and creates a pattern of a life in constant crisis. Throughout my time working in shelter services, I have seen the loss of items we assisted in obtaining for the families, such as birth certificates, social security cards, and important financial documents necessary for recertification for vouchers. I have witnessed people being evicted due to a lack of communication between the sheriff's office and the housing commission, circumstances that are out of their control, losing everything, and ending up in a shelter.

Our teachers, emergency personnel, social workers, and medical personnel see the patterns with multigenerational poverty and the impact it has on entire communities. Implementing steps like this legislation will help end the cycle. We all need to work together to help families achieve a sustainable future and thrive for upward mobility for everyone's benefit. Advance notice of eviction dates and reclamation time will help families to find financial assistance or another housing solution plus the time to gather their belongings which will be life-changing. Resources will be more effectively directed at helping families preserve their important documents and cherished belongings rather than replace them.

I appreciate your consideration of my testimony and your commitment to our entire community for a better future.

Sincerely,
Heather Cassity
CEO/Cassity Consulting
Chair, Coalition to End Homelessness in Anne Arundel County and Annapolis City
BOD, Anne Arundel Affordable Housing Coalition