

March 7, 2024
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TESTIMONY ON SB0992 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Real Property - Landlord and Tenant - Procedures for Failure to Pay Rent, Breach of Lease, and Tenant Holding Over

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

FROM: Anna T. Levy, on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

My name is Anna T. Levy and I am a resident of District 16 in North Bethesda. On behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ), I am submitting this testimony in support of SB0992, Real Property - Landlord and Tenant - Procedures for Failure to Pay Rent, Breach of Lease, and Tenant Holding Over. JUFJ organizes 6,000 Jews and allies from across the state in support of social, racial, and economic justice campaigns.

Jewish sacred texts recognize that people having safe, stable housing is key to a healthy society. Access to safe and stable housing has far-reaching economic, health, and social benefits for individuals, families, and communities, and is key to reducing racial inequities. Senate Bill 0992 helps ensure that tenants do not lose all of their possessions when they are faced with the loss of their homes.

No child should have to come home from school and find their clothes, beds, and toys tossed outside. No one should have to undergo the indignity of finding their possessions on the street, unprotected from the elements and passersby. The loss of basic tools and furnishings that make our homes liveable, inflicts additional hardship on those who face the loss of their homes. In addition to the challenges of finding new housing, tenants must find the resources to replace the basic things that they need to survive, along with the loss of irreplaceable items like family photos which we all take for granted. This adds to the financial impact of eviction, further preventing families from ever reaching financial stability.

Renters need and deserve reliable notice of the eviction date so that they can exercise their statutory right of redemption ("pay to stay") or make plans to leave the property with their belongings intact. Equally, Maryland renters (like most renters in the country) deserve a reclamation period after the eviction occurs, to mitigate the financial and personal loss that evictions cause. A "reclamation period" is a period post-eviction in which a renter can still gain access to their possessions such as life-saving medicine, electronics, and personal treasures such as photos, mementos, and heirlooms.

SB0992 is critical legislation that would protect renters and bring Maryland in alignment with the rest of the country on executing evictions. This legislation would 1) provide tenants notice 14 days in advance of their impending eviction dates; and 2) provide tenants the opportunity to reclaim whatever personal possessions are on the property for ten (10) days after the eviction occurs.

On behalf of Jews United for Justice, I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0992.