

**In Support of Bill 49-20: Human Rights and Civil Liberties –
Discrimination in Rental Housing – Fair Criminal History and Credit Screening
January 12, 2021**

This testimony is submitted in support of **Bill 49-20, Human Rights and Civil Liberties – Discrimination in Rental Housing – Fair Criminal History and Credit Screening**, by Anna Levy and Deedee Jacobsohn, both residents of District 1, on behalf of Jews United for Justice. JUFJ draws on the Jewish tradition of a commitment to justice to advance campaigns to improve the lives of people in Montgomery County.

The Book of Lamentations compares homelessness to the loss of a parent or spouse. By contrast, the establishment of a permanent home promises lasting security. Thus, God's ultimate promise to the Jewish people, articulated first in God's covenant with Abraham, is the guarantee of a home. Without a secure home, normal social relations fall apart, and happiness becomes impossible. Homelessness brings with it fear, depression and a loss of grounding.

The best way to permanently reduce the population of homeless individuals is to help those who are experiencing homelessness obtain permanent housing. However, formerly homeless individuals often face discrimination in obtaining new housing based on previous homelessness, systemic racism, and previous criminal records. Currently, landlords are not required to reveal criminal background considerations, credit requirements, or rental fees on applications and can refuse a rental application without explanation. These practices compound existing racial inequities in housing.

We thank Councilmember Glass and Councilmember Katz for co-sponsoring this important bill, which seeks to reduce racial and social inequities in access to housing by requiring transparency in tenant screening practices and prohibiting consideration of specific types of criminal charges or convictions. **We hope that the final bill will include oversight and penalties** for violation of the requirements outlined.

We urge the members of the Montgomery County Council to approve Bill 49-20 to help to interrupt the cycle of homelessness that disproportionately affects Black and brown families and individuals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this meaningful legislation.