

March 3, 2025

Carol Stern

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

TESTIMONY Bill 6-25- FAVORABLE
Consumer Protection – Defective Tenancies as Deceptive Trade Practices

TO: Montgomery County Public Safety Committee and the County Council

My name is Carol Stern and I am a resident of Chevy Chase in District 1 and a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda. I am providing this testimony in support of Bill 6-25.

My Jewish tradition's primary concern regarding landlord-tenant relations is the question of landlords providing and maintaining a safe and secure place for tenants to rent. Jewish Law legislates that landlords are required to provide “the door, the bolt, the lock, and anything which is the work of an artisan”, meaning any feature of a home that a civilian could not keep up on their own. The law also offers other details indicating that the landlord is obligated to maintain and pay for all structural elements of the home. If the home collapses, the landlord must rebuild it as the same sort of housing as it was at the beginning of the lease. In addition, a landlord may not neglect a unit until it collapses and then rebuild a bigger or smaller unit that would be ill-fitting to this tenant’s needs, in order to push them out and squeeze higher rent out of someone else.

Bill 6-25, Consumer Protection – Defective Tenancies as Deceptive Trade Practices is exactly in line with Jewish tradition. It will close a huge loophole that currently exempts landlords from Consumer Protections law. This enables a disproportionate number of landlords to market and rent substandard, unsafe, and unhealthy dwellings, while leaving tenants with no effective legal recourse. Once passed, this legislation would also allow the County to hold the worst actors accountable and collect fines that historically have largely been left uncollected.

Every person, regardless of race or income, should have a safe, stable and well-maintained home that matches what was marketed to them when they signed their lease And yet, some landlords believe that their own profit is more important than the safety and stability of tenants, especially tenants who are low-income, come from marginalized backgrounds, and may have no other choice but to rent from them., As a result, these landlords let the buildings they own fall into disrepair, or throw whole families out on the street to try to squeeze more money out of the next renters.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on Bill 6-25.