



## **Hundreds of Renters Urge Legislators to Support “Housing Justice Package” on Protect Our Homes Day Webinar**

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**Contact:** Matt Losak, 301-588-3987  
Zafar Shah, 410-429-0765

**Maryland**—More than two hundred renter activists urged their legislators to support a series of legislative proposals now pending the Maryland General Assembly aimed at balancing the relationship between landlords and tenants and preventing evictions. Protect Our Homes Day (POHD) webinar was held on Tuesday, February 23 and was organized by Renters United Maryland (RUM), a statewide coalition of nonprofit, civic and religious advocacy organizations.

Protect Our Homes Day webinar provided renters and legislator an overview of pending legislation and hosted an opportunity for renters from across the state to tell their stories and ask questions about pending legislation.

“The voices of renters for far too long have been sidelined,” said Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins (D-20, Montgomery), who has introduced the comprehensive Covid1-19 Emergency Renter Relief Act and provided opening remarks. “Renters voices speaking up and making a demand for bold, unprecedented action for renters, to make sure we learn the importance of affordability and protections for renters. Your voice is what is going to make the difference.”

RUM’s Housing Justice Package includes priority bills that would create emergency protection against eviction, court reforms that focus on early interventions between tenants and landlords and provide tenants with a right to be represented by a lawyer when facing eviction. Another priority bill is aimed at providing mortgage protection for homeowners and landlords also in financial crisis due to the pandemic.

The POHD virtual event afforded renters, who are approaching 40% of state residents, the opportunity to question legislators. Terri Harris, a senior living in Montgomery County asked “Are there funds available from the state rent relief funds for nonprofits to provide early, direct, personal guidance to renters to help them well before they get into the eviction pipeline?”

Another renter, Marisol Torres from Prince Georges County, told her story of living in constant fear of eviction through no fault of her own: “The pandemic affected me immediately. It has been a year since I lost my job. All my savings have run out. I have not been able to pay my rent.

The leasing office has been threatening us constantly with eviction. Letters on red paper tell us we have 30 days to move out. We are losing sleep. At night while our children sleep, we stay awake wondering how we can keep from being thrown out in the street.”

Billy Baker, a veteran and renter in living in Baltimore, “It took me more than a year to find stable housing, but just because I got it, doesn’t mean it can’t be taken away.”

Legislators attending included Senators Shelly Hettleman (D-11, Baltimore City) and Susan Lee (D-16, Montgomery) Mary Washington (D-43, Baltimore City) were joined by Delegates Jheanelle Wilkins, Vaughn Stewart (D17, Montgomery) Regina Boyce (D-43, Baltimore City)Melissa Wells (D-40, Baltimore City), Pam Queen (D-14, Montgomery), Sam (Sandy) Rosenberg (D-41, Baltimore City) Jen Terrasa, (D-13, Howard) Lorig Charkoudian (D-20, Montgomery), staff members from the offices of Senator Jeff Waldstreicher (D-17, Montgomery) and Delegate Julie Palakovich-Carr (D-17, Montgomery) also participated.

To view detailed information on RUM supported priority legislation go to

[www.RentersUnitedMaryland.org](http://www.RentersUnitedMaryland.org).

Renters United Maryland (RUM) was co-founded in 2017 by the Public Justice Center, the Montgomery County Renters Alliance, Jews United for Justice and Communities United. The RUM coalition includes more than 30 nonprofit, legal, labor, civic and religion-based organizations dedicated to advancing renters’ rights and protections in the state legislature, and defending against legislation hostile to rental housing stability, quality and affordability.

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