



**For Immediate Release:**  
March 9, 2021

**Contact:** Matt Losak, 301-588-3987  
Zafar Shah, 410-625-9409 ext. 237

## **Renters United Maryland (RUM) Statement in Response to Mark Up of Renter Protection Legislation**

Maryland--The Maryland General Assembly (MGA) has an immediate opportunity to protect more than 200,000 Maryland residents face eviction, and thousands more uncounted renters who will “self evict” after receiving eviction threats and losing hope. There are essential provisions from Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins’ emergency Eviction and Housing Relief Act (HB 1312) that must be passed to go beyond the protections enacted by Governor Hogan and the CDC. The bill must contain:

- An eviction moratorium that covers all evictions throughout state of emergency, including lease non-renewals and “Tenant Holding Over” evictions, currently missing in Governor Larry Hogan’s and the CDC’s eviction orders,
- Post-emergency protection from lease non-renewals and “Tenant Holding Over” evictions,
- A rental relief program that requires recipient landlords not to evict their tenant during the emergency,
- Requirements that landlords apply for emergency rental assistance and offer a repayment plan before they can file an eviction during/after emergency.

House Judiciary Committee’s latest mark-up of HB 1312 permits lease non-renewals and Tenant Holding Over evictions during the current pandemic and in future catastrophic health emergencies. However, under the Committee’s mark-up of HB 52, a judge would have discretion to grant an emergency stay of eviction whenever a tenant shows evidence that the eviction would endanger the tenant’s life or health.

The primary protection in the marked-up HB 1312 is a trial defense in Failure to Pay Rent and Breach of Lease evictions, available during a declared catastrophic health emergency and for 3-6 months thereafter. Just as in Gov. Hogan’s March 2020 Executive Order, HB 1312 would require tenants to prove at court a substantial income loss related to the emergency. Going one step further than the Executive Order, the marked-up bill also would require in Breach of Lease evictions that tenants additionally prove that the breach was caused by or related to their substantial income loss.

Renters United Maryland (RUM), a statewide coalition of more than 30 nonprofit, civic, religious, legal and labor organizations established to advance renters’ rights, housing stability and quality in Maryland, strongly urges the rejection of amendments that severely weaken the bill.

What the MGA does now will provide a blueprint not only for how Maryland handles today’s massive crisis of health and housing, but tomorrow’s, too. In the coming days, the MGA has the opportunity to make a bold statement and ensure these provisions remain in the bill to protect the hundreds of thousands of families at risk of losing their homes. Particularly for low-income earners and households of color, who are disproportionately

impacted by both the pandemic and housing instability, the MGA's actions could prevent disaster or exacerbate one.

RUM stands ready as a partner in these negotiations to provide expert opinion and analysis as the state's organized voice for the renter community.

###