



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(301) 952-3700
County Council

POSITION STATEMENT

HB 18

Delegates W. Fisher,
Rosenberg, Stewart, and
Wilkins (Judiciary
Committee)

Landlord and Tenant – Eviction Action – Right to
Counsel

POSITION:

SUPPORT

HB 18 – Landlord and Tenant – Eviction Action – Right to Counsel – Establishing that certain individuals have a right to legal representation in eviction proceedings; establishing the Right to Counsel in Evictions Coordinator to organize and direct services and resources to provide covered individuals with legal representation for a judicial or administrative proceeding; providing for the legal representation of certain individuals in certain proceedings and civil matters by certain organizations; providing for outreach and education regarding tenants' rights by certain community groups, etc.

House Bill 18 establishes a right to legal representation for certain individuals in the State in eviction-related proceedings. The bill creates a Right to Counsel in Evictions Coordinator in the Office of the Attorney General whose purpose is to organize and provide for access to legal representation for all covered individuals. Covered individuals are defined as anyone who occupies a residential property under legal right other than the owner and has an income under 50% of the median income in Maryland. The bill establishes a special, nonlapsing fund (the Right to Counsel in Evictions Fund) to satisfy the goals of the legislation. The right to counsel will be phased in over four years, with full implementation by October 1, 2025.

The Prince George's County Council supports legislation aimed at assisting Prince George's County residents during this challenging time. Prince George's County is home to a significant low-income population and evictions often have a disparate impact on these households. We are concerned about the continued ramifications the COVID-19 pandemic will have on the ability of individuals to maintain employment and to stay in their homes. This legislation codifies the legal right to representation in eviction actions and ensures legal services are made available to those most in need; it is critical to ensure all Marylanders have equal opportunity for representation in the judicial system.

For the foregoing reasons, the Prince George's County Council **SUPPORTS HB 18** and respectfully requests your favorable consideration of its position.

Prepared by: Evans & Associates
On behalf of Prince George's County Council

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