



February 2, 2024

The Honorable Delegate Ben Barnes
Chair, Appropriations Committee
Room 121, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**HB 428 - Community Schools - Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program
and Fund - Establishment
Hearing before the House Appropriations Committee
February 6, 2024**

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 428, which would create an eviction prevention program for families with children enrolled in Maryland's Community Schools.

Community Legal Services of Prince George's County ("CLS") is a private, non-profit organization that provides free legal services to low-income Maryland residents. Since 1985, we have provided civil legal assistance in Prince George's County, and we extended our services to assist Anne Arundel County residents in landlord-tenant matters as the need for legal representation increased during the pandemic. Each year, CLS assists thousands of tenants who are facing possible eviction.

Eviction prevention funding programs are a crucial mechanism to maintain stability for families, schools, and communities. Students facing eviction are six times more likely to be chronically absent and four times more likely to not complete high school.ⁱ Students who have experienced housing insecurity were more likely to have a lower GPA as well as poorer mental health outcomes.ⁱⁱ The National Center on Family Homelessness estimates that the graduation rate of children experiencing homelessness is less than 25%.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future is investing significant funds to assist families whose children are attending Community Schools. These schools provide coordination of wraparound services including transportation, healthcare, counseling, and healthy food. When students are evicted from their homes, they lose the support provided to them by their Community School.

This loss of support compounds the negative impacts of eviction, and those costs are borne not only those families and the surrounding communities, but all Maryland residents.

Eviction preventing funding pays for itself multiple times over. A 2023 report found that every dollar spent on eviction prevention saves the State \$2.39.^{iv} Savings come in multiple forms, including lower costs for healthcare, homeless shelters, foster care, and government safety net benefits, as well as increased revenue from economic and employment stability. The economic impacts associated with educational attainment represent nearly a quarter of those savings.

Rental assistance through eviction prevention funds benefits all Maryland residents. A family will not lose their home, a child will not be torn from their school and community support system, and all residents of the State will benefit economically. An investment by the General Assembly in an eviction prevention funding program for Community Schools will be an important step in ensuring that adequate eviction prevention funds are available in the State.

CLS supports the funding program created in HB 428 and also supports prioritizing the needs of families who are homeless or most at risk of homelessness. CLS urges you to submit a FAVORABLE REPORT on House Bill 428.

Respectfully submitted,

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ⁱ John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities, *Housing Instability and Educational Outcomes of San Mateo County Youth*. April 2022. Available at: <https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/publications/study-homeless-and-highly-mobile-students-san-mateo-county/housing-instability-and>.

ⁱⁱ Mariah Kornbluh, Jennifer Wilking, Susan Roll, and Robin Donatello, "Exploring housing insecurity in relation to student success," *Journal of American College Health*. April 26, 2022. Available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07448481.2022.2068016>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Health Care for the Homeless, Homelessness in Maryland, <https://www.hchmd.org/homelessness-maryland> (last visited January 30, 2024).

^{iv} Stout Risius Ross, LLC., *Assessment of Maryland's Need for Eviction Prevention Funds (EPF) and the Estimated Fiscal Impact of EPF*. Report prepared for Maryland Eviction Prevention Funds Alliance. December 19, 2023. Available at https://www.mdeconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Assessment-of-Marylands-Need-for-EPF-and-Directional-Fiscal-Impacts-of-EPF_FINAL_2023.12.19-1.pdf.