

SB354_PGCEX_FAV.pdf

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THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: SB 354 - Montgomery County and Prince George's County - Rent Court Workforce Solutions Pilot Program

SPONSOR: Senators Waldstreicher and Jackson

HEARING DATE: February 14, 2024

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS SB 354 - Montgomery County and Prince George's County - Rent Court Workforce Solutions Pilot Program**, which establishes the Rent Court Workforce Solutions Pilot Program to connect individuals facing eviction with workforce development services.

The three year pilot program provides \$100,000 per year per county to place a local workforce development professional in the District Court on days that rent court is in session. This workforce development professional would connect rent court litigants with workforce development services (e.g., job opportunities, training/upskilling opportunities, wraparound services, etc.) so that they can possibly prevent their eviction or avoid rent court in the future.

The concept is pretty simple – people showing up to rent court generally need workforce services the most. This bill makes it possible for Employ Prince Georges, and WorkSource Montgomery in Montgomery County, to reach them directly. The workforce development professional in the courthouse will get basic information from the rent court litigant (i.e., name, address, DOB, contact info, career interests/experiences) and EPG will follow up with them within 24-48 hours. It is also worth noting that EPG's services will not be limited just to rent court defendants, but really to all residents in the courthouse that day.

Should this bill pass, EPG will be able to reach many more Prince George's County residents, particularly those most in need of our services. Evictions and housing instability not only disrupts lives but also perpetuates cycles of poverty. This bill is a proactive approach to breaking that cycle. Even if we are unable to prevent the

eviction that brought them to court that day, connecting residents with higher paying jobs will prevent them from returning to rent court in the future.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS SB 354** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

Employ Prince George's - SB 354 Testimony - FAV.pd

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Walter L. Simmons, President

Bill Number:	Senate Bill 354
Title:	Montgomery County and Prince George's County – Rent Court Workforce Solutions Pilot Program
Committee:	Judicial Proceedings
Hearing Date:	February 14, 2024
Position:	FAVORABLE

Employ Prince George's, Inc. ("EPG") is a nonprofit organization based in Prince George's County, Maryland. EPG serves as the Administrative and Fiscal Agent of the Prince George's County Local Workforce Development Board and is responsible for regulating policy development and the administration of workforce activities related to services and programs funded by the federal Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA). Under the leadership of EPG, the Prince George's County Local Workforce Development Area serves over 30,000 jobseekers and 4,000 businesses annually.

EPG is dedicated to empowering individuals in our community by connecting them with meaningful employment opportunities and supportive services. We understand the devastating impact that eviction can have on individuals and families, particularly those who are already facing unemployment or underemployment. Senate Bill 354 presents a proactive and innovative approach to addressing the root causes of eviction by connecting rent court litigants with workforce development services.

This legislation represents a crucial step towards breaking the cycle of poverty that often leads individuals to rent court in the first place. By reaching those who are unemployed or underemployed at the courthouse, we can intervene early and provide them with the resources they need to stabilize their housing situation and achieve economic stability. The Rent Court Workforce Solutions Pilot Program will not only help individuals avoid eviction but also empower them to access job opportunities, training programs, and wraparound services that can lead to long-term success.

SB 354 aligns with our mission to promote economic opportunity and social equity in Prince George's County and beyond. We believe that by implementing this pilot program, we can make significant strides towards creating a more just and equitable society for all residents. For the foregoing reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 354.

MMHA - 2024 - SB 354 - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Grason Wiggins

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 354

Committee: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: February 16, 2024

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA) is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members house more than 538,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA's membership consists of owners and managers of more than 210,000 rental housing homes in over 958 apartment communities and more than 250 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

Senate Bill 354 ("SB 354") establishes the *Rent Court Workforce Solutions Pilot Program* (Program) within the Montgomery County and Prince George's County District Courts. The Program will operate on days that rent court is in session and connect individuals involved in the rent court process with critical workforce development services and employment opportunities to help prevent evictions.

Due to Maryland's right to redeem law, Prince George's and Montgomery County residents have the right to "pay and stay" after a rent court judgement up to three times per year. Due to the right to redeem, many residents that receive a judgment in rent court ultimately avoid eviction by paying the amount of rent due in the judgement prior to an eviction.

By providing employment information and opportunities during the rent court process, SB 354 will create sustainable economic change for residents and break the cycle of residents returning to rent court. Additionally, SB 354 will lower the number of rent court cases and ultimately assist the District Court with streamlining its rent court process.

In FY 2023, Maryland allocated approximately \$11.8 million for the Access to Counsel Program, and Maryland has allocated \$14 million per year for the Access to Counsel Program for FY 2024 through FY 2027. By comparison, the small amount of funding allocated in SB 354 will create beneficial and sustainable outcomes for individuals involved in the rent court process.

Pursuant to SB 354, organizations like Employ Prince George's and WorkSource Montgomery will be able to quickly connect individuals with employment opportunities, workforce services, and wraparound assistance. Collectively, those services create a unique and sustainable method to ensure that more residents are connected with economic opportunities, which will prevent future rent court cases. For these reasons, MMHA strongly supports SB 354 and respectfully requests a favorable report from the Committee.

Please contact Grason Wiggins at (912) 687-5745 with any questions.

SB 354-AOBA--FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Ryan Washington

Position: FAV



Bill No: SB 354—Montgomery County and Prince George's County - Rent Court Workforce Solutions Pilot Program

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Date: 2/14/2024

Position: Favorable

The Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington (AOBA) represents members that own or manage more than 23 million square feet of commercial office space and 133,000 apartment rental units in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

Senate Bill 354 establishes the Rent Court Workforce Solutions Pilot program in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties to provide individuals facing evictions for failure to pay rent to receive resources and information on workforce development. The bill requires the State to appropriate \$100,000 for both County Executive offices for the pilot program.

AOBA supports this well-intentioned legislation that focuses on professional development for individuals who may lack jobs and are facing eviction. This bill is necessary to provide residents with the tools needed to be successful and have stability in their lives by possessing a job to maintain their standard of living. AOBA members understand how traumatic the eviction process can be, and this bill opens an avenue to identify and assist those residents who truly need support and employment opportunities to take care of themselves and their families.

For these reasons AOBA requests a favorable report on SB 354.

For further information contact Ryan Washington, AOBA Manager of Government Affairs, at 202-770-7713 or rwashington@aoba-metro.org.