



Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership
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HB 797 - Support

Warrants of Restitution and Writs of Possession - Data Collection and Reporting

Testimony of Adria Crutchfield, Executive Director, acrutchfield@brhp.org
The Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership
Judiciary Committee, February 18, 2020

Since 2012, the Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership (BRHP) has helped over 5,000 families overcome barriers to accessing safe neighborhoods with high performing schools and better job opportunities. In addition to providing rental assistance BRHP counsels participating families to prepare them for success in their new neighborhoods. One topic of our counseling program is how to maintain positive relationships with property owners and property managers. BRHP also mediates disputes when intervention can help a family stay in a good home. Despite our best efforts, there are still cases where we do not succeed in preventing or diverting eviction and such an event has disastrous consequences for a family's success.

BRHP strives to make data-driven policy decisions and we research evidence for the theories of change that impact our program. One area where research is unnecessarily difficult is eviction proceedings. Through the Eviction Lab, Matthew Desmond, the Maurice P. During Professor of Sociology at Princeton University, demonstrates how poor the existing dataset for understanding the depth of the problem really is. However, we do know that half of Maryland renters face a high rent burden, and eviction is a much higher threat to the vast majority of those families that do not have access to the types of counseling and mediation services BRHP provides to our participating families. Unscrupulous landlords coupled with high rent burden and substandard housing conditions, artificially manufacture risk and allow them to cyclically generate profit through eviction.

We have many questions about eviction proceedings in Maryland that are only answerable given a reliable, consistent, statewide dataset. Some basic data points that a tracking system should regularly monitor and report on would include the number of evictions carried out statewide annually, which jurisdictions or census tracts are most severely impacted, the geographic or periodic differences in reasons for eviction, and how evictions may be related to patterns of neighborhood change. Such a dataset can and should be generated and published by the State Court Administration to provide for the type of groundbreaking research that has been possible in other states. Most importantly, it would allow housing providers, housing advocates, and policy makers to better understand how rent court and eviction may continue a legacy of discriminatory housing practices and allow for prescribing an adequate remedy. BRHP supports passing HB797.