



Testimony SB 454
Senate Judicial Proceeding Committee
February 5, 2021
Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Smith & Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland's community development sector and serves nearly 200 member organizations. CDN—focuses on small affordable housing developers, housing counseling agencies and community-based non-profits across the state of Maryland. The mission of CDN is to promote, strengthen and advocate for the community development sector throughout Maryland's urban, suburban and rural communities. CDN envisions a state in which all communities are thriving and where people of all incomes have abundant opportunities for themselves and their families.

SB 454 would establish the Eviction Diversion Program in the District Court to reduce the incidence of judgments for repossession of residential property and to promote continuity of housing; requiring the Chief Judge of the District Court to establish a Program in a District Court sitting in a county that processed 10,000 or more claims for repossession of residential property in fiscal year 2019; requiring that a landlord provide a certain written statement to a tenant within 5 days of receiving a certain request from the tenant; etc.

Eviction isn't just a byproduct of poverty, but a driver of it. According to "Evicted" author Matthew Desmond's research, a year or more after eviction, families are more likely to experience hardships like hunger or going without electricity. Evicted workers are more likely to get laid off. Children are more likely to miss school. Eviction has had a disproportionate impact on black women who struggle to regain footing for themselves and their children.

In a new study published in Sociological Science in December 2020, found that property owners disproportionately threaten Black and Hispanic renters—particularly women—with eviction. Drawing on millions of court records of eviction cases filed between 2012 and 2016, the study found that Black renters received a disproportionate share of eviction filings and experienced the highest rates of eviction filing and eviction judgments. Black and Hispanic renters were also more likely to be serially filed against for eviction at the same address.

COVID-19 pandemic has put hundreds of thousands of Maryland households in desperate conditions. This is the time for reform of the eviction system to protect people who have been hardest hit by COVID-19.

We respectfully request a favorable report for SB 454.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director, Community Development Network