

HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF
SB 384 – *Landlord and Tenant – Stay of Eviction Proceeding for
Rental Assistance Determination*

House Judiciary Committee
March 29, 2022



Health Care for the Homeless supports SB 384 as amended, which would provide for the stay of evictions for Failure To Pay Rent (FTPR) proceedings, on a case-by-case basis, if a judge determines that a good faith rental assistance application to resolve the debt is pending.

Since December 2021, 105,000 Maryland households are behind on rent and 62% of Maryland renters feel “very” or “somewhat” likely to be evicted in the next two months. There is an [estimated rent debt of \\$392 million](#). The good news is that Maryland has unprecedented eviction funding. Local emergency rental assistance programs (ERAPs) have enough money to pay the entirety of rent debt in the state. Yet, in the second half of 2021, there were nearly 27,000 eviction cases filed for non-payment of rent per month. **In that time, 705 households were evicted per month.** Evictions have hugely devastating consequences on a person’s life. It is simply commonsense that if an individual is awaiting the funding that can pay their rent and avoid eviction, our public policy should allow them to do that.

SB 384 would temporarily pause evictions, incentivize landlords to accept rental assistance, and align the pace of rental assistance with eviction processes for fairness and efficiency. While there is more than enough ERAP assistance to cover every household who is behind on rent due to FTPR, the disbursement of ERAP funding has not kept up with the pace of FTPR eviction cases. In December of 2021, over 23,000 FTPR cases were filed and over 3,000 FTPR warrants were served. However, just over 6,000 households were served with ERAP funds. SB 384 would remove that incentive for landlords to aggressively pursue eviction because the Court could pause the eviction while a good faith rental assistance application is pending. **No one should be evicted when there is money to pay the rent – especially during a pandemic.**

Health Care for the Homeless is a member of the Renters United Maryland coalition and asks that the Committee **issue a report of FAVORABLE on SB 384.**

Renters United Maryland is a coalition of independent non-profit, legal services, and community-based organizations. In 2022, Renters United Maryland calls on the General Assembly to ensure that Maryland’s COVID recovery isn’t leaving renters behind. See Renters United Maryland’s Housing Justice plan for the 2022 legislative session here: <https://rentersunitedmaryland.org/>.

Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland’s leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We work to prevent and end homelessness for vulnerable individuals and families by providing quality, integrated health care and promoting access to affordable housing and sustainable incomes through direct service, advocacy, and community engagement. We deliver integrated medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, and housing support services for over 10,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. For more information, visit www.hchmd.org.