



ACCESS TO COUNSEL IN EVICTIONS TASK FORCE



February 22, 2022

To: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Vicki Schultz
Chair, Access to Counsel in Evictions Task Force

Re: Senate Bill 629 – Landlord and Tenant – Eviction Data – Collection and Distribution
(SUPPORT)

The Maryland Access to Counsel in Evictions Task Force supports Senate Bill 629, which would collect and make available timely and important information about where evictions are taking place across the State.

Currently, data about evictions in Maryland is limited. Current data does not provide the level of detail needed about eviction cases and outcomes; it is not produced in real time, nor is it well integrated with other sources of available data. This bill would begin to fix that problem by requiring basic data sharing between the Judiciary and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) regarding evictions. Specifically, the bill would take an important step toward integrating data about eviction outcomes with other data already kept by DHCD about housing trends, rental assistance and other homelessness prevention resources.

As you know, the Task Force is responsible to evaluate the services provided through the Access to Counsel in Evictions Program and make recommendations that would improve the implementation of the Program. Effective right to counsel programs around the country that move the needle on reducing evictions have also relied on integrated real-time data to assess and adjust their programs as they are implemented. However, the absence of data hampers the ability of the Task Force to play that role as the Program is implemented.

Additionally, the lack of real-time data limits the ability of those administering the Program to:

- Identify eviction “hot spots” (i.e., neighborhoods with high eviction rates);
- Target outreach and education efforts to communities experiencing relatively high numbers of evictions;
- Assure equity in the implementation of the Program; and



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- Assess and adjust the program as it is implemented throughout the State.

Senate Bill 629 will not only improve the ability of the Task Force to do its job in assessing the Access to Counsel in Evictions Program, but also will assist decision makers—including legislators, those in the executive branch, as well as all involved in the eviction process—to access critical data. The Task Force, therefore, respectfully urges that the Judicial Proceedings Committee report favorably on Senate Bill 629.