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BILL NO.: SB 521

TITLE: Landlord and Tenant - Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund - Mandatory Appropriation

SPONSOR: Senator Hettleman

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 15, 2022

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 521 – Landlord and Tenant - Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund - Mandatory Appropriation. This bill would require the Governor to appropriate excess federal rental assistance funds to be appropriated to the Access to Counsel in Special Evictions Fund.

At the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, County Executive Olszewski acted quickly in the face of rising rates of unemployment and growing economic insecurity to keep Baltimore County residents in their homes. The County created its first Department of Housing and Community Development, bringing its housing resources together to ensure a concerted and coordinated effort to prevent evictions throughout the pandemic and in years to come. With assistance from the State and Federal governments, and through innovative partnerships such as the STEP Program with United Way, the County has prevented thousands of resident evictions to date.

Residents who are facing eviction currently often do not have the disposable income required to hire representation in the event of an eviction proceeding. The Access to Counsel in Special Evictions fund was created to make resources available for those residents engaged in an eviction proceeding who cannot afford representation. By appropriating excess federal rental assistance funding to this new fund, SB 521 furthers Baltimore County's eviction prevention efforts by expanding the reach of this critical program.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 521. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs at jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov.