

My name is Emily Blank, and I am a resident of District 47a and also a member of Congregation Oseh Shalom in Laurel, MD. I ask you to pass Fund Access to Counsel in the 2022 session.

As someone nearing the end of my work life, I shudder to think what it would be like to lose my home due to loss of income, particularly in this time of COVID,, when the ability to practice good hygiene and social distancing is so important. Housing is important not only for one's physical health, but through that, one's labor productivity and overall quality of life.

Ninety-six percent of landlords have legal representation when they come to rent court, as opposed to 1% of the renters. The reason is at least partially because renters facing eviction are in financial distress, but the fact that most renters do not have legal counsel in rent court puts renters at a severe disadvantage in contesting evictions. The state needs to subsidize legal counsel for renters in order to give them a fighting chance so that such counsel is affordable for the poor and the near-poor.

Again, I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report of Fund Access to Counsel. It will eliminate much hardship.

Emily Blank
3718 Shepherd St
Brentwood, MD 20722
Congregation Oseh Shalom, Laurel, Maryland