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BILL NO.: Senate Bill 662

TITLE: Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund - Funding

SPONSOR: Senator Zucker

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 22, 2022

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 662 – Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund - Funding. This legislation would provide significant additional funding for the abandoned property funds to the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund for fiscal year 2023.

At the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Baltimore 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. SB 662 would shift \$11,800,000 from abandon property funds to the Access to Counsel Evictions Special Fund for the FY 23 budget. This necessary, one time change, reflects the urgency of this issue and would support the County’s efforts to keep residents in their home.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 662. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs at jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov.