

# Collecting Data On Evictions Critical To Crafting Good Policy Responses

## Position Statement Supporting Senate Bill 629

*Given before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee*

Senate Bill 629 requires that the judiciary to collect certain data pertaining to the major categories of eviction cases, requires the judiciary to regularly share eviction data with the Department of Housing and Community Development and ensures that the data is publicly available. This bill is an important step in the right direction to being able to understand how eviction trends are affecting Maryland families and communities and crafting appropriate policy responses. For these reasons, **the Maryland Center on Economic Policy supports Senate Bill 629.**

The spread of COVID-19 has resulted in substantial loss of income for many Marylanders, leaving them unable to afford their rent. Preserving housing stability is critical to set up families and communities for a strong economic recovery. Maryland families were already facing housing instability long before the pandemic. In Maryland, in average of 660,000 evictions are filed annually. In Baltimore City, there are more eviction cases files yearly then there are available rental units, which suggests repeated eviction filings by landlords.

In Maryland:

- 115,000 eviction cases were filed from July to November of last year
- Over 2,500 Marylanders were evicted amid the surging public health crises from July to November of last year

The COVID-19 crisis has spotlighted the reality that Maryland's current eviction process is by design a race to displace Marylanders. Thanks to a recent report, we know that 99% of renters face eviction without the assistance of a lawyer.<sup>1</sup> When a family receives an eviction judgement, it is a loss of a home, their possessions, school, community, employment, mental and physical health and the ability to secure a new place to live. Moreover, as advocates across the state work together to assist Maryland's most vulnerable residents, it has become clear that the lack of data collection in the courts makes it hard to collect and share reliable data about Maryland's eviction crisis, ensuring that those most in need are receiving the required assistance necessary to maintain their home.

Maryland does not know where evictions are most concentrated or who is being evicted. The state cannot make informed decisions about which communities to target for outreach or assistance without real time data at a community level. This is an urgent need as the pandemic continues and the state distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in rental assistance. Maryland does not have a place where all statewide eviction data is collected and analyzed. Currently, the Maryland Judiciary only publishes county level eviction filings and outcomes a month after they happen. Current, detailed data are critical for analysis to target community and state interventions as

well as for an efficient civil legal system. Because there is no state mandate or framework for stewarding eviction data, jurisdictions vary in types of data they collect and make available.

As a result, it is difficult to make cross jurisdictional comparisons or to compare data from the county level to the state level. Further, Maryland is not included in any state comparative analysis, including Eviction Lab which was the first national database created to help neighbors and policymakers understand the eviction crisis. For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy respectfully requests the Judicial Proceedings Committee make a favorable report on Senate Bill 629.

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## **Equity Impact Analysis: Senate Bill 629**

### *Bill Summary*

Senate Bill 629 requires that the judiciary to collect certain data pertaining to warrant restitution or a writ of possession issued in accordance with a certain judgment for possession of residential property. It also requires the Judiciary to share eviction data with the Department of Housing and Community Development every 2 weeks as well as requires the Department to make eviction data available in a certain format to a state agency or an academic institution located in the State.

### *Background*

Maryland currently does not know where evictions are most concentrated or who is being evicted. The state cannot make informed decisions about which communities to target for outreach or assistance without real time data at a community level. This is an urgent need as the pandemic continues and the state distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in rental assistance. Maryland does not have a place where all statewide eviction data is collected and analyzed. Currently, the Maryland Judiciary only publishes county level eviction filings and outcomes a month after they happen. Data are critical for analysis to target community and state interventions as well as for an efficient civil legal system.

### *Equity Implications*

In Maryland:

- 115,000 eviction cases were filed from July to November of last year
- 36% of Black households are not current on their rent compared to 14% of white households
- Over 2,500 Marylanders were evicted amid the surging public health crises from July to November of last year
- 30% of households earning less than \$50,000 are behind in their rent compared to just 10% of those earning \$75,000 or more.

### *Impact*

Senate Bill 629 will likely **improve racial, gender, and economic equity** in Maryland.

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<sup>i</sup> Public Justice Center (2019) The Economic Impact of a Right to Council in Baltimore City. <https://bmorerentersunited.org/rtc/stoutreport/>