



Testimony SB 756
Budget & Taxation Committee
March 1, 2023
Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Budget & Taxation Committee

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland's community development sector and serves nearly 200 member organizations. CDN—focuses on small affordable housing developers, housing counseling agencies and community-based non-profits across the state of Maryland. The mission of CDN is to promote, strengthen and advocate for the community development sector throughout Maryland's urban, suburban and rural communities.

SB 756 -Permanently requiring that \$11,800,000 of abandoned property funds to the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund.

Access to counsel has been successful in preventing unnecessary evictions and increase housing stability for Marylanders who are struggling to make ends meet. Importantly, the program has helped to level the playing field in rent court, where landlords have held huge advantages for decades. The justice system only works fairly when both parties have access to professional representation.

Evictions exacerbate the public health crisis posed by COVID-19 and create significant costs for state and local governments including costs associated with shelters, education, transportation for homeless youth, foster care, and health care provided in hospitals rather than community-based care. Further, evictions continue to have disparate impact on Black and Brown households.

Over the past decade, research shows that evictions reinforce poverty and limit housing opportunities for Maryland's most fragile citizens. The stain of an eviction sets women of color on a path of housing insecurity that limits educational and economic opportunities, and increases health problems for them and their families.

We ask that the committee issue a favorable report on SB 756.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director, Community Development Network