



BILL NO: Senate Bill 756
TITLE: Access to Counsel in Evictions – Funding
COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation
HEARING DATE: March 1, 2023
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the Senate Judicial Budget and Taxation Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 756.**

Senate Bill 756 would make permanent the requirement that the Comptroller distribute \$14,000,000 of certain abandoned property funds to the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund. It would also make permanent the requirement that the Governor include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$14,000,000 from the Fund to the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC).

With more than a third of domestic violence victims experiencing homelessness after leaving their abuser, the ability to access safe and affordable housing is paramount for victims and survivors of domestic violence. An inability to access safe and affordable housing is often an insurmountable barrier for a victim attempting to leave a domestic violence situation. Victims often remain in abusive relationships and children are exposed to ongoing violence because they have nowhere safe to go and are at risk of homelessness or housing instability.

Despite federal and state protections intended to prevent eviction for victims of domestic violence and support them in obtaining safe and affordable housing, victims often find themselves homeless. Victims face punishment or discrimination for an abusive partners violence. Often, victims experience financial abuse and may have insufficient funds and poor credit, both necessary to secure housing.

SB 756 would make permanent the appropriation that is necessary to financially support counsel for tenants facing eviction proceedings. Victims of domestic violence would greatly benefit from counsel at evictions proceedings to ensure that federal and state law is followed, and they are not being discriminated against or wrongfully evicted.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on SB 756.**

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