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BILL NO.: SB 756

TITLE: Access to Counsel in Evictions - Funding

SPONSOR: Senator Guzzone

COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: March 1, 2023

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** SB 756 - Access to Counsel in Evictions - Funding. This legislation would make permanent the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund, a life-changing service that would provide access to counsel for residents facing eviction.

Baltimore County's Department of Housing and Community Development is committed to reducing the rate of evictions in Baltimore County and removing barriers for low-income families to retain housing. Residents facing evictions more than likely cannot afford to retain counsel to plead their case, and as a result are poorly equipped to have adequate representation in court proceedings. While Baltimore County currently provides some of its own funding for access to counsel in evictions, the County cannot tackle the full need alone.

Senate Bill 756 would fund the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund for the amount of \$14 million in perpetuity. Without this vital legislation, the fund is set to expire after FY24. If this funding does not continue beyond FY24, Maryland families will be placed at a greater risk of eviction due to a lack of access to adequate legal services. Not having the State sustain its investment would ultimately lead to more evictions of those who can't afford representation, traumatizing families, and place a greater strain on other critical services and programs, including those managed through DHCD's Homeless Services and Housing Stability divisions.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 756. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.