



**SB370 Community Schools - Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program and Fund -
Establishment
Position: Favorable**

3/22/2024

The Honorable Delegate Barnes, Chair
Appropriations Committee
Room 121
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

CC: Members of the House Appropriations Committee

Economic Action Maryland is a people-centered movement advocating for economic rights, housing justice, and community reinvestment. Our work focuses on supporting working families, low-income communities, and communities of color. Economic Action Maryland provides direct assistance today while passing legislation and regulations to create systemic change in the future.

I am writing today to strongly urge a favorable report on SB370, for the establishment of a Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program and Fund, which takes a step towards addressing the root causes of housing instability among students.

Community schools are hubs of learning, engagement, and community empowerment. Yet, many students and their families at these schools are one job loss, medical bill, or unexpected crisis away from possibly losing their housing. Out of the over 400 clients that applied to our tenant advocacy program for eviction prevention services, nearly half had children, with many households being led by single parents. Senate Bill 370 recognizes the direct correlation between stable housing and a child's ability to thrive academically and beyond.

This legislation addresses not just the immediate need for housing relief but lays the groundwork for a more equitable and resilient educational system. Low income children who switch schools frequently due to housing instability or homelessness tend to perform less well in school and are less likely to graduate from high school. When they grow up, they are also more likely to be employed in jobs with lower wages, reproducing a cycle of generational financial instability. Beyond these outcomes, housing instability impacts the entire school community. Students who attend schools with large populations of hypermobile children due to unstable and unaffordable housing also suffer academically, since more time must be devoted to review and catching up on work.

For these reasons I urge you to support SB370. Let's build a more resilient, compassionate, and equitable Maryland—one where every child, regardless of their housing situation, can reach their full potential.

Sincerely,
Zoe Gallagher, Policy Associate