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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB 428**  
**Testimony by Delegate Vaughn Stewart**  
**February 6, 2024 • Appropriations**

**What the Bill Does:**

The bill (HB 428) would establish a new rental assistance program for families with students enrolled in community schools. The Fund would be administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), in consultation and conjunction with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The bill includes a mandated appropriation of \$10 million.

The fund would offer rental assistance and eviction prevention funds, which can be used for payments, arrears, late fees, and relocation costs. To be eligible, the family must be at risk of homelessness or eviction, and must include at least one student enrolled in a community school. The assistance would be capped at the cost of 12 months of rent.

For the last few weeks, Senator Hettleman and I have been working closely with stakeholders on amendments designed to create a program that makes use of each agency's strengths.

**Why the Bill is Important:**

The Maryland General Assembly has chosen to dedicate significant resources to community schools within the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Community schools work in collaboration with community partners, local governments, and other stakeholders to provide wraparound services that address barriers to learning and success. Such services can include, but are not limited to, healthcare services, counseling services, access to healthy food, safe transportation to and from school, and extended learning hours. All of these services are aimed at supporting the educational pathways of students who need it the most—those who are members of historically underfunded and under-served communities across the state. Community schools yield documented [school-wide positive effects](#) on academic performance, family and community engagement, attendance, absenteeism, and discipline and health issues.

One service, however, which community schools do not currently provide is rental assistance. Housing insecurity presents a significant problem for students' educational success, while also having

serious negative consequences for communities and classrooms. Students whose families experience repeated evictions must adapt to new friends, teachers, classrooms, and learning environments every time they switch schools. These changes are not only disruptive to their learning, but can also be harmful to their social and emotional development.<sup>1</sup>

Student mobility does not only affect the student; instructional quality and the success of the entire class are compromised when classrooms regularly lose and gain new students during the school year.<sup>2</sup> Additional data suggests that school mobility as a result of eviction may disproportionately affect students and communities of color, especially communities of color.<sup>3</sup>

For students in Maryland community schools, the problem is then compounded. Access to a broad range of essential services is linked to their housing situation. **Evictions already mean students are separated from their friends and teachers—in community schools, evictions mean the entire family is separated from vital wraparound services.**

Linking rental assistance to the other wraparound support services offered by community schools would make a huge difference in the lives of community school students and their families. It would shield students from the negative effects of housing insecurity on their education and personal development. It would ensure that students and their families maintain consistency in receipt of essential services and benefits. It may also offer families the services and resources required to relocate from dangerous, uninhabitable housing or predatory landlords.

### **Why the Committee Should Vote Favorably:**

The evidence is overwhelming: **Students with unstable housing do worse in school and students with stable housing do better.** Administering rental assistance through Maryland community schools would provide the missing link in wraparound services, protecting students and their families from housing insecurity while shielding them from the compounded negative effects of losing other essential services.

**A vote for HB166 is a vote to strengthen the Blueprint and empower our most vulnerable neighbors. I urge a favorable report.**

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<sup>1</sup> [The Impact of the Looming Eviction Cliff on School-age Youth](#), National League of Cities.

<sup>2</sup> Haley Jr., Victor Pearse. [THE IMPACT OF EVICTION ON STUDENT DISPLACEMENT: An Atlanta Case Study](#).

<sup>3</sup> Cowin, Rebecca, Hal Martin, and Clare Stevens. [Measuring Evictions During the COVID-19 Crisis](#).