



TESTIMONY

SENATE BILL 370

**Community Schools - Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program and Fund -
Establishment**

Appropriations Committee

March 26, 2024

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Budget and Tax 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. CDN envisions a state in which all communities are thriving and where people of all incomes have abundant opportunities for themselves and their families.

SB 370 - Establishes the Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program to provide rental assistance to eligible student households; requiring the State Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Housing and Community Development, to administer the Program requiring the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$10,000,000 for the Fund; etc.

According to the Maryland Housing Needs Assessment completed in 2021 by the National Center for Smart Growth and Enterprise Community Partners, Maryland is short 85,000 rental units for low- income households. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future: Report on Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty analyzes the impact of poverty and socioeconomic status on student achievement, educational attainment, and other educational outcomes. According to the report, "Concentrated poverty and neighborhoods have a demonstrated and significant impact on a student's educational career."

Housing is an urgent priority for student achievement and learning loss from the pandemic. The revolving door of students in low-income communities due to housing instability make successful schools impossible. Community schools have been an excellent intervention and rental assistance can stabilize both the family and the school. Establishing a Fund that could provide cash assistance and support services to families experiencing financial crises that hinder their ability to pay their rent and stay housed. Too often, short term shocks have long term consequences which could be avoided if timely assistance was easily accessible. Safe, affordable, quality housing provides a foundation from which children can engage fully in schooling and set themselves up for success in the future.

We ask your favorable report for SB 370.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director