



SB 370 – Community Schools - Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program and Fund - Establishment

Hearing of the Budget and Taxation Committee, January 31, 2024

Position: Favorable

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR) urges you to support SB 370, which will create an eviction prevention funds program for families with children enrolled in Maryland’s community schools.

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility is the statewide affiliate of Physicians for Social Responsibility. With our 900 supporters, our mission is to address the greatest public health threats of all: nuclear war and climate change, but we are also committed locally to addressing environmental injustice and health disparities. Health disparities may arise from problems with lack of employment, lack of educational opportunities, unhealthy environments, but nothing is more central to causing health disparities than housing insecurity. Evictions represent the worst outcome of housing insecurity, which includes high housing costs in proportion to income, poor housing quality, unstable neighborhood, overcrowding, and homelessness.¹

At Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility, we know that prevention is the best treatment and preventing children from experiencing evictions is good medicine. There was a recent review² of the best designed studies looking at the harms from eviction filings and evictions on children from birth to age 9 which concluded the following:

- 1) A recent eviction was associated with worse mother-reported child health status at age 5 years.
- 2) Evicted children had more hospitalizations and worse access to energy, health care, and childcare.
- 3) For a cohort of at risk 9-year-old children experiencing evictions in the preceding year, that experience was associated with cognitive losses compared to non-evicted children that were equivalent to the loss of one full year of schooling.

¹ <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-frm-asst-sec-111918.html>

² <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2803667>

4) Evictions of pregnant women are associated with bad birth outcomes including premature birth and low birth weight.

5) A study in Cleveland found that by age 2, when there was an eviction filing history, there was a drop in lead testing and increase in lead levels compared to other children and even worse where there was actually an eviction.

If eviction filing is prevented for school age children, siblings born into the family where evictions have been avoided may experience better birth outcomes which could translate into lifelong health advantages. Preventing evictions may promote lead testing and prevent lead poisoning and irreversible brain injury in younger siblings.

Housing is health. Young children exposed to overcrowding and/or multiple moves in one year, were more often reported by their caregivers to have poor health, impaired educational, social or emotional skills, and were measured to have low weight compared to other children.³

In older children and adolescents, a history of multiple moves has been associated with mental health problems substance abuse, increased behavior problems, poor school performance, and increased risk of teen pregnancy. These negative outcomes will likely handicap them in their adult lives.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future is investing significant funds to assist families whose children are attending community schools. Located throughout Maryland, [Community Schools](#) provide support for families by coordinating wraparound services like transportation, healthcare, counseling, and healthy food. **Without an investment in eviction prevention funds, students in community schools who are evicted will lose ready access to the support of their community school.**

Recent research is clear that preventing evictions stabilizes the family, the school, and the community. Students facing eviction are 6 times more likely to be chronically absent and 4 times more likely to not complete high school,⁴ and students who have experienced housing insecurity were more likely to have a lower GPA as well as poorer mental health outcomes.⁵ The National Center on Family Homelessness estimates that the graduation rate of children experiencing homelessness is less than 25%.⁶ **Families cannot thrive without safe, stable housing. Schools cannot thrive with a student body forced to live in unstable and deplorable conditions.**

According to a recent research report by Stout Risius Ross on eviction prevention funds in Maryland, a fully funded program would more than pay for itself. Every dollar spent on eviction prevention saves the State \$2.39.⁷ A full \$40 million investment in eviction prevention would yield approximately \$92 million

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3134514/>

⁴ <https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/publications/study-homeless-and-highly-mobile-students-san-mateo-county/housing-instability-and>

⁵ Mariah Kornbluh, et al., Exploring Housing Insecurity in Relation to Student Success, J Am Coll Health, Apr. 2022. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35471954/>

⁶ Health Care for the Homeless, Homelessness in Maryland, <https://www.hchmd.org/homelessness-maryland> - :~:text=The National Center on Family,14.6%25 are proficient in reading

⁷ <https://www.mdeconomy.org/eviction-prevention-funds/>

in cost savings or avoidance for the State by reducing homelessness and state-funded safety net costs related to shelter, assisting students experiencing homelessness, health care, foster care, decreased incarceration, and the economic impacts of increased employment and income stability. **On education alone, Stout estimated that a fully funded eviction prevention funds program (about \$40 million) would provide \$23.75 million in benefits to the State through better education outcomes for students and an increase in federal funds.**

Eviction prevention through rental assistance furthers gender and racial equity. Women-led (70%) and Black-led (74%) households have avoided eviction with help from the state's current emergency rental assistance program and likely will be evicted at much higher rates unless the Governor and General Assembly take action.

We understand that the bill sponsor, Sen. Hettleman, will work with advocates, the Maryland State Dept. of Education, and the Dept. of Housing and Community Development to refine the administrative structure of the program and minimize the burden on community school coordinators. We also understand and support changing the current prioritization in the bill to better address the needs of families who are homeless or most at risk of homelessness.

Maryland cannot be a national leader in leaving no one behind, ending childhood poverty, righting the racial wrongs of the past, and ensuring shelter for all without investing in eviction prevention funds.

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility **urges you to move favorable on SB 370. For more information **contact:** Gwen L. DuBois MD, MPH President at gdubois@jhsph.edu**