



## **SB0370 – Community Schools - Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program and Fund - Establishment**

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

**Position: Favorable**

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**SUPPORT: SB0370** would help meet a critical need by ensuring that Community Schools staff have an efficient way to secure funds to: prevent evictions, provide rental assistance, and provide other resources to support students whose families are struggling with unsafe housing, the threat of homelessness, and homelessness.

ACDS serves as Anne Arundel County's nonprofit housing and community development agency, helping Anne Arundel County residents thrive through their ability to obtain and maintain safe, stable, and affordable housing. As part of fulfilling this role, ACDS administers an Eviction Prevention Program using federal, State and local funds. ACDS also administers grants to other nonprofits providing eviction prevention funding and works closely with the County's Continuum of Care, the Coalition to End Homelessness, and foundations and faith-based organizations that help households at risk of eviction.

We frequently work with Pupil Personnel Workers, McKinney-Vento Liaisons and others connected to our local schools to try to help school families struggling with housing instability and homelessness. We know the lengths to which these school employees go to try to pull together resources for families in crisis so they can find housing, keep housing, or replace unsafe housing with safe and stable housing. *They scramble tirelessly*, reaching out to multiple sources at once, navigating the complex eligibility and paperwork requirements of many different programs, not to mention trying to keep track of what organizations may have funding or may have exhausted their funding at any given time. The Rental Assistance Program contemplated by this bill would eliminate that scramble by keeping the rental assistance piece of the families' need for assistance "in-house."

While there will clearly be a new administrative component for MDSE, technical assistance is available through the Department of Housing and Community Development, and because of the need to create emergency rental assistance programs throughout the State in response to the Covid public health crisis, best practices are known and can be replicated to ensure the new program is efficient and successful.

As written, the bill targets Community Schools. To ensure aid reaches those families most in need, we would urge that any amendments to SB 370 emphasize collaboration between community school coordinators, Pupil Personnel Workers, and McKinney-Vento liaisons, who all play a pivotal role in supporting students facing or experiencing homelessness.

**For the reasons noted above, ACDS urges the Committee to issue a FAVORABLE report on SB0370.**