

The Baltimore City Youth Action Board

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

The Baltimore City Youth Action Board (“YAB”) urges you to support SB 370, which will create an eviction prevention funds program for families with children enrolled in Maryland’s community schools.

The Baltimore City YAB is in full support of bill **SB370**. We believe this bill will give youth the opportunity to achieve academic success without the burden of housing instability. We understand that youth burdened with housing instability tend to focus on survival rather than receiving education when faced with these challenges. **SB370** creates a preventative option to keeping minors off the streets. Homeless youth who do not receive the support needed, typically are placed in dangerous and compromising situations that can possibly alter the course of their future. This can lead to criminalization of homelessness, long-term homelessness, and trauma. Housing instability significantly affects the educational experiences of youth, posing challenges hindering their schooling and overall academic success and we hope to address this through **SB370**.

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,¹ and students who have experienced housing insecurity were more likely to have a lower GPA as well as poorer mental health outcomes.² The National Center on Family Homelessness estimates that the graduation rate of children experiencing homelessness is less than 25%.³ **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. A full \$40 million investment in eviction prevention would yield approximately \$92 million 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

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

² Mariah Kornbluh, et al., Exploring Housing Insecurity in Relation to Student Success, J Am Coll Health, Apr. 2022.

³ Health Care for the Homeless, Homelessness in Maryland, <https://www.hchmd.org/homelessness-maryland>(last visited Dec. 1, 2023).

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.

The Baltimore City YAB urges you to move favorable on SB 370. For more information contact: bmoreyab@gmail.com