



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Sponsor Testimony in Support of HB372
Montgomery County and Prince George's County - Rent Court Workforce Solutions Pilot Program
Delegate Kevin M. Harris
Wednesday, February 21, 2024

Good afternoon, Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Delegate Kevin M. Harris, and I stand before you today to offer my enthusiastic support for House Bill 372, which seeks to establish a Rent Court Workforce Solutions Pilot Program. This innovative initiative represents a crucial step towards addressing the underlying causes of evictions in our communities.

As we all know, eviction proceedings often stem from the inability of tenants to meet their rental obligations, which is frequently tied to unemployment or underemployment. By recognizing this correlation and taking proactive measures to intervene, we have the opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of those most vulnerable to housing instability.

The Rent Court Workforce Solutions Pilot Program aims to do just that by strategically placing workforce professionals within the courthouse environment. This placement ensures that individuals facing eviction have direct access to the resources and support necessary to overcome their employment challenges. Whether it be job training, resume assistance, or connections to employment opportunities, these services have the potential to fundamentally alter the trajectory of individuals and families facing housing insecurity.

By integrating workforce development services into the fabric of the rent court process, we can effectively reach those who are most in need of assistance. Instead of waiting for individuals to seek out help on their own, we are meeting them where they are, in the very midst of their housing crisis. This proactive approach not only increases the likelihood of successful outcomes for tenants but also promotes greater efficiency within the court system itself.

Furthermore, the implementation of this pilot program holds the promise of reducing the number of repeat litigants in rent court proceedings. By addressing the root causes of eviction, such as unemployment and underemployment, we can help individuals stabilize their housing situations and avoid future encounters with the legal system. This not only benefits the individuals directly involved but also contributes to the overall stability of our communities.

In conclusion, House Bill 372 represents a proactive and compassionate approach to addressing the complex issue of evictions. By recognizing the link between housing instability and employment challenges and by providing targeted support through the Rent Court Workforce Solutions Pilot Program, we have the opportunity to make a meaningful and lasting impact on the lives of Maryland residents. I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 372 with the adoption of the amendments referred by the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee.