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To: Members of the House Appropriations Committee
From: Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA)
Subject: HB 103 – Access to Counsel in Evictions – Task Force Termination and Special Fund
Date: February 7, 2025
Position: **Support**

The Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) joins its partner, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, and **supports House Bill 103 – Access to Counsel in Evictions – Task Force Termination and Special Fund**. HB 103 makes permanent distributions by the Comptroller from funds gained from abandoned property in the State to the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund; terminates the Access to Counsel in Evictions Task Force on January 31, 2026; and makes permanent an annual \$14,000,000 appropriation by the Governor from the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund to the Maryland Legal Services Corporation.

MSBA represents more attorneys than any other organization across the state in all practice areas. Through its advocacy committees and various practice-specific sections, MSBA monitors and takes positions on legislation that protects the legal profession, preserves the integrity of the judicial system, and ensures access to justice for Marylanders.

MSBA Supports Continued Funding for Civil Legal Aid

MSBA supports continued funding for civil legal aid programs to expand the availability of Maryland's high-quality legal services to the state's low-income and vulnerable populations. MSBA remains a strong advocate for the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC), an entity that provides a significant resource to Marylanders for direct legal services.

As the client-eligible population for civil legal aid services continues to grow, ongoing civil legal aid funding would address both the current and future need for services in cases that affect the basic human needs of Marylanders. Timely access to representation creates stability for those in need as more Maryland attorneys would be able to explain, analyze, and resolve complex legal issues, allowing clients to avoid a cascade of legal problems and collateral harm. Investments in civil legal aid can yield a positive economic and societal impact on the state by reducing long-term costs related to other services including shelter, medical and court expenses, and counseling.

For these reasons, MSBA respectfully urges a **favorable report on House Bill 103**.

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