



House of Ruth Maryland

Domestic Violence Legal Clinic

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Bill No.: Senate Bill 154
Bill Title: Access to Counsel in Evictions – Task Force Termination and Special Fund
Committee: Budget and Taxation
Hearing Date: January 15, 2025
Position: **FAV**

House of Ruth is a non-profit organization providing shelter, counseling, and legal services to victims of domestic violence throughout the State of Maryland. House of Ruth has offices in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Prince George’s County, and Montgomery County. Senate Bill 154 would allocated \$14 million annually to the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund. **We urge the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee to favorably report on Senate Bill 154.**

Many survivors of intimate partner violence face housing instability and are at risk of eviction due to circumstances related to their abuse. Perpetrators of abuse often exercise financial control over their victims, including failing to pay rent unbeknownst to the victim, or failing to pay Emergency Family Maintenance pursuant to a protective order, causing the victim to be without sufficient means to pay rent. Having access to counsel in evictions proceedings protects the rights of survivors and helps them maintain stable housing, which is crucial for their safety and ability to live independently and free of violence.

The House of Ruth urges the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee to report favorably on Senate Bill 154.