



**SB0154 – Access to Counsel in Evictions  
Task Force Termination and Special Fund  
Hearing before the Budget and Taxation Committee  
January 15, 2025**

**Position: SUPPORT (FAV)**

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**SUPPORT:** Arundel Community Development Services, Inc., (“ACDS”) urges this Committee to issue a Favorable report on SB0154, which would make permanent distributions by the Comptroller from funds gained from abandoned property in the State to the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund and make 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.

ACDS serves as Anne Arundel County’s nonprofit housing and community development agency, helping Anne Arundel County residents and communities thrive through the provision of safe and affordable housing opportunities, programs to prevent and end homelessness, and community development initiatives. As part of this role, ACDS advises the County on issues related to affordable housing, develops housing and community development strategies for Anne Arundel residents and communities, and implements programs that provides direct assistance to renters facing eviction and homeowners facing foreclosure.

To address serious housing challenges and ensure that Anne Arundel County is “the Best Place for All,” Anne Arundel County is tackling the housing crisis with a multi-faceted approach, including the implementation of programs to help residents who have housing to keep that housing. During the COVID pandemic, Anne Arundel County utilized a combination of local, State and federal funds to stand up a successful eviction prevention program which included two major components: (1) payment of arrears on behalf of low-income renters; and (2) legal services through Community Legal Services. These efforts resulted in preventing the eviction of over 6,000 households. As federal COVID funding for eviction prevention assistance has been almost fully expended in Anne Arundel County, the County has continued to prioritize eviction preventions by allocating local Housing Trust Fund dollars to continue an eviction prevention program, although it continues at a reduced capacity given the limited funds available. Additional State and federal funds are needed to ensure a robust program continues.

Permanently authorizing State funding to support the Access to Counsel (ACE) Program for renters so that legal services can be provided at the local level is a step in the right direction to leverage our local resources and ensure this important program continues at some level, post-COVID.

**For the reasons noted above, ACDS urges the Committee to issue a FAVORABLE report on SB0154.**