

**SB 556 - Real Property – Fraudulent Possession and Unauthorized  
Lease or Listing – Prohibition and Removal  
Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,  
Feb. 6, 2025**

**Position: OPPOSED**

Shore Legal Access (formerly Mid-Shore Pro Bono) strongly opposes SB 556 because it will increase homelessness and raises the potential for violent encounters with law enforcement in our communities. We have seen too many tenants and other residents victimized by scams and predatory practices by landlords. SB 556 will remove existing tenant protections, empower predatory property owners to **evict residents without court oversight and due process**, and will **make the Sheriff the judge and jury** in certain cases. We strongly oppose this assault on our communities on the Eastern Shore.

Shore Legal Access (SLA) connects people on the Eastern Shore with limited financial means to legal representation and essential community resources. Each year, SLS helps over 3,800 people in our communities access the legal system when they would otherwise be shut out. Our small legal team and network of volunteer lawyers provide free legal services for eviction prevention, criminal record expungement, life and estate planning, family law, foreclosure, and consumer debt. These services help families gain financial and housing stability and create safe, secure homes for children.

SLA is a provider of legal services under the Access to Counsel in Evictions (ACE) program in 8 Eastern Shore counties (Caroline, Dorchester, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester). Tenants on the Eastern Shore have embraced the opportunity to obtain legal representation through the ACE program since the program began in 2022. Since July 1, 2022, SLA's staff and volunteers have represented over 1,660 Eastern Shore tenants with mover favorable outcomes in nearly every case. These services collectively helped tenants reduce their financial burden by over \$368,000. When given the chance to have representation, tenants are taking advantage of that option, and as a result, getting better outcomes.



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SLA strongly opposes SB 556 and urges the Committee's unfavorable recommendation on this bill. If you have any questions regarding our position on this bill, please contact Anthony Rodriguez, Esq. at [tonrod1894@gmail.com](mailto:tonrod1894@gmail.com) or Meredith Girard, Executive Director at 410.690.8128 or e-mail [mgirard@shorelegal.org](mailto:mgirard@shorelegal.org)