

HB1571 - Real Property - Access to Counsel in Evictions Program and Mobile Home Parks

HEARING BEFORE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE 3/4/26 1 pm
POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Shore Legal Access respectfully requests your favorable report for HB1571. This bill makes necessary and long overdue updates to Maryland's law governing mobile home parks. This legislation clarifies that mobile home tenants have access to legal representation under the Access to Counsel in Evictions program and provides meaningful protection for tenants, including notice requirements, required lease terms, guardrails on park fees and utility charges, and procedural safeguards in the event of repossession.

Shore Legal Access (SLA) connects people on the Eastern Shore with limited financial means to legal representation and essential community resources. Each year, SLA helps over 3,0000 people in our community 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 give people hope and agency over their future.

Mobile home residents are among Maryland's most vulnerable tenants. Mobile home park residents occupy a uniquely precarious position in Maryland's housing landscape. They own their homes but rent the land beneath them. Eviction does not merely displace a family, it can force them to abandon or move a significant financial asset. Moving a mobile home is expensive, logistically complex, and often impossible. Older adults and low-income families are especially vulnerable to housing loss in a mobile home eviction. Despite this vulnerability, mobile home park residents have historically operated with fewer legal protections than traditional renters.

Mobile home tenants should have legal representation under the Access to Counsel in Evictions program. As a provider for Maryland's Access to Counsel in Evictions program, we see firsthand the unique challenges mobile home tenants face and the benefits of having legal representation. Having legal representation helps to level the playing field, facilitates equitable resolutions, and leads to better outcomes for both parties.



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Tenant protections for mobile home park tenants are necessary reforms.

Clear notice and opportunity to cure: HB 1571 establishes meaningful notice requirements before a park owner may file a complaint for repossession. A park owner must provide written notice of intent to file, including the type and basis of the complaint. In cases of nonpayment of rent, the resident has 10 days to cure before a complaint may be filed. These provisions promote fairness and transparency. They help prevent unnecessary displacement by giving residents a clear opportunity to resolve issues before court involvement. Allowing a reasonable grace period can prevent families from losing their homes over a temporary hardship.

Fair rental agreements: HB1571 strengthens rental agreement requirements including mandatory 1-year initial terms, clear standards for renewal, and prevents clauses that are unenforceable.

Limits on fees and utility charges: This bill would end unpredictable and unreasonable fees that have been used to burden residents. The bill sets a clear standard protecting residents from arbitrary charges.

Safeguards during repossession: One of the most important aspects of this bill are the provisions addressing repossession. After a warrant of restitution is executed, residents would have at least 30 days to recover personal property, sell their mobile home, and seek a purchase offer from the park owner at fair appraised value. Safeguards during repossession are particularly important because the cost of moving a mobile home is typically more than the value of the property itself. Often, the mobile homeowner is never able to move their home of the park and must abandon their home without any compensation. In these situations the landlord ultimately gets ownership of the mobile home. HB1571 acknowledge the unique financial stakes of mobile home park evictions and provide a meaningful opportunity for residents to protect their assets.

We ask for your favorable report for HB1571. By expanding access to counsel, strengthening notice requirements, limiting unreasonable fees, and creating meaningful protections in repossession proceedings, this bill promotes housing stability and economic security for some of Maryland's most vulnerable. For more information about our position, please feel free to reach out to Meredith Girard, Esq., Executive Director, at: mgirard@shorelegal.org, 410-690-8128.