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Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children,  
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SPONSOR TESTIMONY**

**April 1, 2026**

**Senate Bill 729 – Access to Counsel in Evictions Programs- Mobile Home Parks**

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis and Judiciary Committee Members

For the record, I am Senator Shaneka Henson representing District 30 in Anne Arundel County. Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 729 – Access to Counsel in Evictions Programs. We respectfully request a “favorable with amendments” vote on this legislation.

The original version of SB729 was amended in JPR to focus specifically on ensuring that mobile home residents have the same access to legal representation in the eviction process as residential renters. This amended bill clarifies that mobile home residents are “covered individuals” in the Access to Counsel in Maryland’s evictions program.

However, after the amended SB729 was approved, it was discovered that three important notice provisions, crucial to a successful prevention process, were not included.

1. Requiring legal service providers to assist mobile park residents “as soon as possible” after a park owner issues a notice to end the resident’s tenancy (page 4, lines 12-16); this timing requirement currently exists for residential renters, helping to ensure legal representation is available prior to the formal initiation of legal proceedings;
2. Requiring the park owner to issue a Notice of Intent to File a Complaint for eviction based on non-payment of rent; presently, residential renters receive this type of notice, which informs them about the ACE law; and
3. Providing the mobile home resident with 10 days to cure non-payment of rent, after notice, before the park owner may initiate the eviction filing in court; this curing provision also exists for residential renters by virtue of the Access to Counsel in Evictions legislation in 2021.

SB729 responds to the pleas of mobile home residents dealing with landlord-tenant practices that are not addressed in existing laws in Maryland’s statutes. Maryland has nearly 437 mobile home communities providing essential affordable housing. Primarily located in the southern, mid, and northeast, and eastern shore areas residents in these communities include retirees, elderly, veterans, county, and state employees, as well as families at the margin or below the average median income level, such as immigrants, people with disabilities, and others in need of below market-rate housing. While residents either rent or own their dwelling units, all are charged

separate fees to rent the land upon which the units set. Furthermore, because these dwelling units are not movable – and are vulnerable to landowner demands, establishing this legislation means that the nearly 31,000 households in Maryland’s affordable mobile home parks will have the right to access legal representation in an eviction proceeding.

WHY IS THIS NEEDED? Owners of these mobile home communities are predominantly private investors. Neglect of the infrastructure and community needs are common practices. Residents voicing concerns about these issues are threatened with eviction and/or continually receive additional fees for services without justification. Residents are typically only allowed a one-year unrenewable lease, which includes practices that are not covered under Maryland law. Existing federal and state laws protecting landlord-tenant relationships, the maintenance of a community’s infrastructure, and how non-related costs are passed on to tenants, are inadequate to protect the ability of these vulnerable residents to remain in these affordable communities.

Maryland’s mobile home residents are not alone experiencing these issues. Legislators in the states of Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, Oregon, Washington, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Washington, Rhode Island, and others have adopted regulatory changes protecting residents’ ability to continue to live in these affordable communities. Maryland needs to do the same and protect residents ability to have affordable housing.

SB729 and the companion HB1517, is the product of a five-month work group effort that included legal aid attorneys, mobile home community residents, and affordable housing advocates.

On behalf of the residents of these affordable communities, we respectfully request a favorable with amendment vote to this bill and acceptance of the additional amendments presented.

**Requested language to the amended SB729**

The following amendments will restore the three missing provisions and put SB 279 on an equal footing with the Access to Counsel in Eviction legislation (HB18, 2021):

Page 4, lines 12-16, remove strikethrough. This amendment restores the requirement to send a Notice of Intent to File in non-payment eviction cases.

Page 27, line 28, remove strikethrough and brackets on “8A-1701.”

Page 27, lines 29-31, remove strikethrough. In line 31, after “rented” insert:

AFTER PROVIDING THE RESIDENT AND ANY KNOWN SUBTENANT WITH WRITTEN NOTICE OF THE PARK OWNER’S INTENT TO FILE A COMPLAINT UNDER SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION: ON A FORM DEVELOPED BY THE MARYLAND JUDICIARY; IN THE MANNER SPECIFIED IN TITLE 8, SUBTITLE 4, SECTION I(2)(I)-(II); PROVIDING THE RESIDENT 10 DAYS FROM THE DATE THE RESIDENT RECEIVES THE NOTICE TO CURE THE NONPAYMENT; AND INFORMING THE RESIDENT ABOUT ACCESS TO COUNSEL IN EVICTIONS UNDER STATE LAW

Page 28, lines 1-25, remove strikethrough. On line 1, after “Whenever,” insert: A RESIDENT HAS RECEIVED THE NOTICES UNDER SECTIONS 8A-1101(B) AND 8A-1701(A) OF THIS SUBTITLE AND HAS NOT TIMELY CURED NON-PAYMENT, AND THE

Page 28, line 8, after “costs,” insert:

(2) (I) A COMPLAINT FOR REPOSSESSION FILED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS SECTION SHALL INCLUDE A STATEMENT THAT STATES AND AFFIRMS THE DATE ON WHICH THE PARK OWNER PROVIDED THE NOTICE REQUIRED UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SUBSECTION. (II) A RESIDENT MAY CHALLENGE ASSERTIONS MADE BY A PARK OWNER UNDER THIS PARAGRAPH, AND THE COURT MAY DISMISS THE COMPLAINT ON A SHOWING OF SUFFICIENT CAUSE.

On page 38, line 30, after “2.” Insert:

AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

On or before October 1, 2026, the Maryland Judiciary shall develop and publish on its website a form titled “Notice of Intent to File a Complaint for Park Owner’s Repossession of Rented Property” to facilitate the implementation of § 8A-1701(a) of the Real Property Article, as enacted by Section 1 of this Act.

(b) The form required under subsection (a) of this section shall include:

The date the notice is provided to the resident and a description of the manner of delivery of the notice;

(2) A description of the past due rent in dispute, including:

- (i) The amounts of rent and late fees due to the park owner, excluding charges related to utilities, services, other fees, fines, or court costs; and
- (ii) The specific periods of time to which the past due rent and fees correspond;

(3) A statement informing the resident that, on request of the resident, the park owner will promptly provide an itemized accounting of debits and credits;

(4) A statement containing information on rental assistance programs;

(5) The contact information of the park owner;

(6) A statement that the park owner may initiate an action for repossession in the District Court if the resident does not cure within 10 days after form notice is received and that the resident has the legal right to dispute the charges.

(7) A statement that the state requires access to legal representation for income-eligible mobile home park residents and information for nonprofit legal services organizations that may provide legal advice or access to legal representation to the residents, as compiled by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation; and

(8) Contact information for the following resources of the court:

- (i) The Alternative Dispute Resolution Office; and
- (ii) The Self-Help Center.