



**SB 729 - Real Property - Access to Counsel in Evictions Program - Expansion
Hearing before the Judiciary Committee, April 1, 2026**

Position: Favorable (FAV)

The Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland (“PBRC”), an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the statewide thought leader and clearinghouse for pro bono civil legal services in Maryland. As the designated pro bono arm of the MSBA, PBRC provides training, mentorship, and pro bono service opportunities to members of the private bar and offers direct legal services to over 5,000 clients annually.

In May 2017, with a grant from the Maryland Judiciary’s Access to Justice Department, PBRC launched the Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day (TVLD) Program in Baltimore City Rent Court to provide day-of-court legal representation to tenants who appear unrepresented for their proceedings. Now called the Tenant Justice Program (TJP), we are one of the primary providers of services through Maryland’s Access to Counsel in Evictions (ACE) Program, providing eviction-related representation to thousands of low-income tenants each year in both Baltimore City and Baltimore County.

In 2021, Maryland became one of the first states in the country to provide tenants the right to counsel in eviction proceedings, providing a means to level the playing field between tenants and landlords and contribute to the overall housing stability of low-income tenants statewide. The Access to Counsel in Evictions (“ACE”) law recognizes the inherent disparity that exists between unrepresented tenants and landlords who have counsel or agents in court. This disparity exists with mobile home residents, i.e. those who own their mobile home but rent a site in a mobile home part for residential purposes, as well. Just like tenants, they too almost always appear in rent court without counsel and thus must face the trauma of eviction without the benefit of an attorney.

An overarching goal of the Tenant Justice Program is to promote housing stability among low-income tenants. Through our work, we meet mobile home park residents facing eviction in court, especially in Baltimore County. We expect to see even more mobile home residents in court as private equity buys up their parks and raises rent and fees.¹ These residents run the risk of losing their homes along with all of the trauma that comes with eviction just as do our current clients. We support the expansion of the ACE law to include these residents as they represent the same vulnerable population that the ACE law was enacted to protect.

For the above reasons,
PBRC urges a FAVORABLE Report on SB 729.

Please contact Katherine Davis, Director of PBRC’s Courtroom Advocacy Project, with any questions.
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¹ Powell, Cassie. Private Equity Firms Are Snapping up Mobile Home Parks – and Driving out the Residents Who Can Least Afford to Lose Them. 3 Nov. 2025, theconversation.com/private-equity-firms-are-snapping-up-mobile-home-parks-and-driving-out-the-residents-who-can-least-afford-to-lose-them-264456, <https://doi.org/10.64628/aai.vhx49jdmv>.

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Commented [SG1]: @Katherine Davis if they are renting the homes, why are they excluded?

Commented [KD1R2]: @Sharon E. Goldstein they own their homes but rent the land that they sit on, so in that sense they can be evicted just like tenants. They are not actually excluded from the ACE law, but were not explicitly included - that is what this bill fixes.

Commented [1R3]: Got it, I wasn't sure about that. Maybe it should be clear that are not meant to be excluded but have been in practice.