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February 8, 2023

Senator Cory V. McCray, Chair
Health and Human Services Subcommittee
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: Support for SB 181 – Department of Housing and Community Development Operating Budget
Hearing of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee, February 10, 2023**

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Dear Honorable Members of the Health and Human Services
Subcommittee,

The Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership urges you to add \$175 million to DHCD’s operating budget to assist an estimated 20,000 Maryland families in avoiding eviction through emergency rental assistance.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership (BRHP). I am writing to express our support for Senate Bill 181 with amendments. BRHP is a non-profit organization that expands housing choices for families with low incomes, who have historically been excluded from housing in well-resourced neighborhoods, helping them to access and transition successfully to safe, healthy, and economically vibrant communities. As the Regional Administrator for the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program, BRHP has opened pathways to a better future for low-income families for nearly 10 years. BRHP currently provides over 4,300 low-income families rental assistance in the form of the Housing Choice Voucher and couples that with counseling supports for families as they move from areas of concentrated poverty to areas of opportunity in Baltimore City and the five surrounding counties.

BRHP is dedicated to helping achieve racially and socially equitable public policy that ensures low-income families have access to quality and affordable homes in communities of their choice. Economic instability stemming from the pandemic continues to push tens of thousands of Maryland households to the brink of homelessness. Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) has helped more than 100,000 Maryland households avoid eviction and assisted small landlords in avoiding financial ruin. However, all remaining federal funds will be exhausted by May 2023. Maryland is now heading towards a “cliff,” where the sudden end of ERA will cause significant increases in evictions and homelessness. [In 2022, stakeholders including five County Executives, state legislators and 50+ organizations signed a letter calling on the Governor to allocate funding](#)

WHY THE URGENCY?

Maryland evictions are rising steadily and are already approaching or exceeding pre-pandemic levels in some jurisdictions.

This trend is especially worrying because ERA has still been available in many of the most populous counties. When ERA ends, the volume of evictions will accelerate substantially beyond pre-pandemic levels.

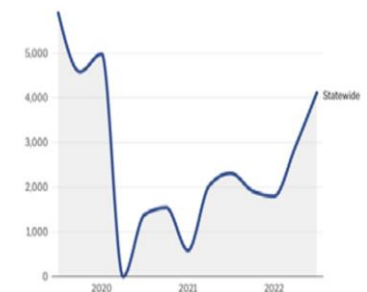


Chart: Ryan Little - Source: Maryland Judiciary Case Activity | THE BALTIMORE BANNER



[to sustain ERA programs](#), which include rent relief as well as housing stability services to help households regain self-sufficiency.

Maryland jurisdictions are currently spending \$30 million/month to help tenants avoid eviction through payments that are usually made directly to landlords. That funding will come to an abrupt stop by May 2023 without action from the Governor and General Assembly. Over 108,000 households are still behind on the rent in Maryland and need assistance avoiding eviction.

Renters are struggling to regain economic self-sufficiency in a post-pandemic economy.

1. Ripple effects from the pandemic are still causing financial disruptions. People are still missing hours at work due to COVID or COVID related closures.
2. Rent inflation skyrocketed during the pandemic, increasing 19% over two years in the Baltimore area alone.
3. Asset depletion and increasing rent debt is widespread among low-income renters. With savings and credit tapped out, households have no buffer to keep them from homelessness when small financial setbacks inevitably happen.

Eviction prevention through emergency rental assistance advances gender and racial equity. Women-led (70%) and Black-led (74%) households have avoided eviction with help from the state's current emergency rental assistance program and will likely be evicted at much higher rates unless the Governor and General Assembly take bold and swift action.

HOW MUCH FUNDING IS REQUIRED TO ADDRESS THE CRISIS?
The Maryland Emergency Rental Assistance Coalition recommends an allocation of **\$175 million** to serve approximately **20,000 low-income households**. The table below shows options for funding levels based on two variables: the months of assistance being offered and target income brackets.

Months of Assistance	\$35k and below 8,901 Households	\$50k and below 20,183 Households	\$75k and below 21,186 Households
4	\$62 million	\$140 million	\$147 million
5	\$77 million	\$175 million	\$184 million
7	\$108 million	\$245 million	\$257 million

*4 months of assistance equates to rental arrears only, 5 months equates to 4 months of arrears and 1 month of forward rent, and 7 months equates to 4 months of arrears and 3 months of forward rent

The Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership **urges you to issue a favorable report with amendments on SB 181 with the addition of \$175 million for emergency rental assistance and related housing stability counseling.** Expenditures should include tenant protections similar to the current federal guidelines and integration with the court eviction process. We also request that DHCD form a workgroup of stakeholders to examine best practices and make recommendations for emergency rental assistance in Maryland moving forward.