

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

Governor Larry Hogan
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland

Re: Funding to Sustain Emergency Rental Assistance in Maryland

Dear Governor Hogan,

Tens of thousands of Maryland families will face eviction early in the coming year without swift action by your administration. These hard-working families are experiencing new or ongoing losses of income due to the continuing volatility in parts of the economy stemming from the pandemic. This financial turmoil is compounded by high inflation and soaring rents. As a direct result of the state's effective emergency rental assistance programs, the evictions of more than 82,000 Maryland households have been avoided since the start of the pandemic. Maryland jurisdictions are currently spending approximately \$30 million each month to prevent evictions, but these vital programs will come to an abrupt stop early in 2023 when most jurisdictions are projected to exhaust all their remaining emergency rental assistance funds.

The termination of the state's rental assistance programs comes at a time when Maryland families are facing record rent increases and continued economic instability and will most certainly lead to a spike in the number of families – predominantly Black and Latine – experiencing eviction and homelessness. For example, in Anne Arundel County, despite there being a robust rental assistance program in place, the number of evictions that occurred from June 2022 through October 2022 surpassed the number of evictions that occurred during the same months in 2019. Had the rental assistance program not been funded and fully operational during those months, the number of actual evictions would have surpassed pre-pandemic numbers by substantially more. Counties around the state are reporting similar experiences beginning around June 2022, when the lingering effects of pandemic-related court closures and eviction delays ultimately came to an end. Legal and social services providers from around the state report that eviction courtrooms are packed at pre-pandemic levels. While eviction filings have decreased likely due to recent changes in eviction filing laws, and more tenants than ever are obtaining legal representation as part of the progressive implementation of the Access to Counsel in Evictions legislation, the proportion of filings resulting in actual eviction has increased, and evictions and housing instability are still rampant. According to recent survey data from the US Census Bureau, approximately one out of every five renter households in Maryland is currently behind on rent. The impact is particularly sharp for persons with disabilities who often live on Social Security Income benefits of only \$841 per month and for whom even a relatively small economic setback could be devastating.

Robust rental assistance programs developed by the state and local jurisdictions in response to the recent public health crisis have shown us that a more resilient housing economy is within reach. Maryland and its local jurisdictions have built a critical infrastructure to administer emergency rental assistance funds, but that infrastructure and the housing stability it ensures will be lost without swift action, including: (1) an emergency allocation of funding to assist jurisdictions to continue their programs as pandemic-related funding runs out in early 2023; and (2) a robust FY 24 allocation for sustainable rental assistance going forward. As the two past years have shown, families can find themselves unable to pay the rent due to forces beyond their control and face an eviction through no fault of their own as a result of medical emergencies, employer business closures,

and other unexpected crises. Maryland's rental assistance programs have proven that we can make a difference for these families and prevent their financial crisis from becoming a catastrophe that leads to homelessness.

We urge you to allocate emergency funding to continue assistance for the remainder of FY 23, and we urge you to provide for a minimum allocation of \$175 million to assist an estimated 17,000 households who would otherwise face imminent eviction in your proposed FY 24 budget. This is a conservative estimate of the need based on application-rate projections put forward by Harvard researchers as well as census data on rental delinquencies and housing costs in Maryland. This total also includes funding to continue the delivery of housing stability services to ensure that families have support and access to resources that will place them in the best possible position to maintain self-sufficiency going forward. We are happy to share additional information supporting this calculation of need and request attention to this matter as soon as possible. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

CITY & COUNTY LEADERS:

Anne Arundel County Executive Steuart Pittman
Baltimore City Mayor Brandon Scott
Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski
Howard County Executive Calvin Ball
Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich

COUNTY REPRESENTATIVE AGENCIES:

Arundel Community Development Services, Inc.
Baltimore City Mayor's Office of Children & Family Success
Frederick County Department of Housing and Community Development, Citizens Services Division
Prince George's County Government Department of Housing and Community Development

DHCD ERAP ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Senator Cory McCray
Senator Shelly Hettleman
Delegate Jazz Lewis
Delegate Vaughn Stewart

ORGANIZATIONS:

Abell Foundation
Accessible Resources for Independence, Inc.
Anne Arundel County Community Action Agency
Anne Arundel County Food Bank, Inc.
Anne Arundel County NAACP
Arundel House of Hope
Associated Catholic Charities, Sarah's House
Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership
Baltimore Renters United
CASA
CASH Campaign of Maryland

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Civil Justice, Inc.
Community Assistance Network, Inc.
Community Development Network of MD
Community Legal Services of Prince George's County, Inc.
Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Maryland
Delmarva Community Action Center
Disability Rights Maryland
Economic Action Maryland (formerly Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition)
Enterprise Community Partners
Fight Blight Bmore
Govans Ecumenical Development Corporation (GEDCO)
Greater Baybrook Alliance
Green and Healthy Homes Initiative
Health Care for the Homeless
Homeless Persons Representation Project, Inc.

iCommunity Connections Services
Jews United for Justice
Job Opportunities Task Force
Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services, Inc.
Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Maryland Coalition of Families
Maryland Community Action Partnership
Maryland Nonprofits
Maryland Public Health Association
MD Sierra Club
Mid-Shore Pro Bono, Inc.
Montgomery County Renters Alliance, Inc.
Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland
Public Justice Center
Renters United Maryland
Shepherd's Table
Southeast Community Development Corporation (Southeast CDC)
United Communities Against Poverty, Inc.
United Way of Central Maryland, Inc.
United Way of the National Capital Area
Welfare Advocates

CC:

David R. Brinkley, Secretary of Budget & Management
Kenneth C. Holt, Secretary of Department of Housing and Community Development
Bill Ferguson, Senate President
Adrienne A. Jones, Speaker of the House
Guy Guzzone, Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
Benjamin Barnes, Chair, Appropriations Committee