

## Minutes of the Access to Counsel in Evictions Task Force's Funding Committee

October 27, 2021

Committee Members in attendance: Deb Seltzer (chair); David Eppler; Beth Harber; Senator Shelly Hettleman; Matt Hill; Nick Katz; Pam Newland; Kelley O'Connor; Pam Ortiz; Delegate Sandy Rosenberg; Reena Shah

Task Force Members and Staff in attendance: Stu Simms; Alexa Mellis; Leah Tulin

The Committee discussed the role of Maryland Legal Services Corporation ("MLSC") as the designated administrator of the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund ("Access Fund") and its ongoing provision and administration of funding for other civil legal services. MLSC received emergency funding last year, including \$2.2 million in eviction prevention grant money that MLSC has already awarded. Other special money that remains (approximately \$2 million) is available to be spent on developing infrastructure for the access to counsel program (e.g., hiring a project manager, working on intake and/or case management, creating fellowship program or pipeline) and will be obligated by the end of FY2022. These funds are intended to lay groundwork for the program but cannot fully fund it.

The committee reviewed a spreadsheet containing information about sources of funding used by other jurisdictions funding legal services in evictions proceedings. Some states already had programs established before the pandemic and had identified a funding source, but are now supplementing with federal funds, whether ERAP or state and local fiscal recovery funds. Baltimore City plans to use Community Development Block Grant funding, supplemented by COVID-19 funds, while Boulder, Colorado assesses a \$75 tax per rental unit to be paid by landlords to generate program funds.

The Committee discussed a proposal to recommend that the Task Force request federal funding prior to issuance of its first report on January 1, 2022. There was acknowledgement of the fact that the exact scope of the staffing needs for the program remain unknown, and also that current eviction prevention case work cannot be sustained into next year because the \$2-\$3 million available this year is one-time funding. The group discussed the fact that federal funds have deadlines for use that generally match the short-term implementation timeline for the program. The Committee agreed to recommend an early request, in advance of the January 1, 2022 Task Force Report, be made to pursue federal funding for short-term implementation objectives.

The Committee discussed next steps, including evaluating other jurisdictions' plans for long-term funding and scheduling another meeting to take place in November.

**Committee Recommendation:** The Funding Committee recommends an early request, in advance of the January 1, 2022 Task Force Report, be made to pursue federal funding for short-term objectives. This recommendation will be brought to the full Task Force.