



PRESS RELEASE

Attorney General's COVID-19 Access to Justice Task Force Requests Extension of Moratorium on Evictions

BALTIMORE, MD (July 24, 2020) - On behalf of the Attorney General's COVID 19 Access to Justice Task Force, Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today sent a letter to the chief judges of the Court of Appeals and the District Court of Maryland requesting the Court extend its moratoria on eviction actions and debt collection cases until January 31, 2021. In its letter to Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera and Chief Judge John P. Morrissey, the Task Force, citing the ongoing public health and economic devastation of the pandemic, requested holding the moratoria in place until the General Assembly has the opportunity to enact, and the Governor to sign, emergency legislation to assist Marylanders with the housing and debt crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The current moratorium restricts Maryland's District Court system from hearing eviction proceedings until July 25, when the current stay on residential evictions is scheduled to be lifted.

"COVID-19 has caused significant hardship for thousands of Maryland families," said Attorney General Frosh. "Loss of jobs and the resulting loss of income have left many residents with little to no resources to pay rent or other bills. If eviction and debt collection proceedings are allowed to move forward, many Maryland families will be forced out of their homes, with no place to go and no income to obtain new housing."

Extension of the moratoria is critical because the ongoing public health emergency has rendered Marylanders' inability to pay rent and consumer debt largely unchanged since the onset of the pandemic. Many Marylanders were struggling to pay housing and other expenses before the COVID-19 crisis, and the pandemic has exacerbated these difficulties exponentially. Specifically:

- The disease continues unabated and disproportionately harms communities of color;
- Economic conditions that will reduce unemployment and enable schools to reopen seem unlikely to improve significantly in the short term;
- Unemployment and other CARES Act benefits are inaccessible or slated to end on July 31;
- Rental assistance is limited;
- Court proceedings under COVID-19 conditions will make eviction and debt collection more challenging.

In its letter, the Task Force noted that allowing landlord-tenant and debt collection cases to proceed will exacerbate what is already a dire situation for many Marylanders. A few months

reprieve would help the State avoid thousands of evictions and provide Marylanders much-needed time to begin to overcome the extraordinary health and economic challenges as a result of the pandemic.

Attorney General Frosh also noted the ongoing work of the Task Force in taking this action to urge extension of the moratoria.

“I also want to thank the Access to Justice Commission, our partner in this endeavor, and members of the Task Force and its committees for their tremendous commitment so far in working to develop solutions and strategies to help address the most pressing and critical needs of so many of our neighbors in the midst of the pandemic. The wealth of knowledge, experience, and diversity amongst the members of the Task Force, along with a shared commitment to assist those in dire need, will allow us to continue our efforts to assist and advocate for those facing unprecedented and unforeseen hardship.”

- [Letter to Chief Judge Barbera and Chief Judge Morrissey](#)
- [Letter to CA and District Court](#)
- [DHCD Follow up Briefing](#)