



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Attorney General's COVID-19 Access to Justice Task Force Requests Governor Hogan Extend Executive Orders to Protect Marylanders from Threat of Eviction and Debt Collection**

**BALTIMORE, MD (July 28, 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 Governor Larry Hogan requesting the Governor extend and expand his Executive Orders on eviction, debt collection, and utilities. The Task Force requested the extension to provide Marylanders much needed protection as a result of COVID-19. Extension of the Executive Orders is critical because the conditions underlying Marylanders' inability to pay rent and consumer debt remain largely unchanged.

"Loss of employment and income due to COVID-19 have resulted in mounting debt and the threat of eviction for hundreds of thousands of Marylanders," said Attorney General Frosh. "The pandemic continues unabated, and it is critical that Marylanders who are suffering have an opportunity to remain in their homes and keep the lights on."

Specifically, the Task Force requested the Governor:

- Amend his eviction and debt collection order so that, rather than requiring largely self-represented tenants to shoulder the burden of proving COVID-19 hardship to avoid eviction, the order affords Marylanders effective protection against losing their homes and possessions in the midst of this public health and economic crisis;
- Increase the amount of rental assistance and civil legal aid funding;
- Renew the prohibition against termination of utilities, other residential services, and late fees currently slated to end on August 1; and
- Ensure that the executive orders on evictions, debt collections, and residential services remain fully in effect until January 31, 2021 or until the pandemic stabilizes sufficiently to enable Marylanders to return to work and have adequate resources to pay their rent and daily living expenses.

According to a report from the Aspen Institute, approximately 330,000 Marylanders are at risk of eviction. In its letter to Governor Hogan, the Task Force noted that even under the moratoria, civil legal aid organizations continue to provide front-line services as they help vulnerable Marylanders ward off threats of illegal evictions or utility shut-offs. Yet these organizations are able to assist only a fraction of tenants facing eviction proceedings even under pre-COVID funding levels. Without additional resources to compensate for funding reductions, they will be able to assist even fewer individuals and families.

Last week, the Task Force 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.

The Attorney General's COVID-19 Access to Justice Task Force, in partnership with the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, brings together high-level and diverse leaders with expertise in a myriad of sectors including health, disaster recovery, business, government, housing, and many others to confront the new challenges faced by many Marylanders as a result of the pandemic.

More information on the Maryland Attorney General's COVID-19 Access to Justice Task Force is available [here](#).