



**Maryland Access to Counsel
in Evictions Program**

**Fiscal Year 2024
(July 2023 – June 2024)
Submitted by**



MLSC

MARYLAND LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

IOLTA - INTEREST ON LAWYER TRUST ACCOUNTS

August 2024 Final



Introduction

In 2021, the Maryland General Assembly created the Access to Counsel in Evictions program (“ACE”) via HB 18/Ch. 746 and designated Maryland Legal Services Corporation (“MLSC”) as the administrator. MLSC is a legislatively created nonprofit with a mission to ensure low-income Marylanders have access to stable, efficient, and effective civil legal assistance through the distribution of funds to nonprofit legal services organizations. The General Assembly created MLSC concurrently with the Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program, and in fiscal year 2024 MLSC provided funding to 44 nonprofit organizations serving Marylanders across the entire state.

HB 18/Ch. 746 provided parameters for ACE, including tenant eligibility, implementation timing and prioritization, case types applicable for legal representation, and tenant outreach and education. It also created the ACE Task Force and the ACE Special Fund, as well as the following reporting requirement:

“On or before August 31 each year, MLSC shall report to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly:

- (1) The number of covered individuals provided legal representation during the previous fiscal year;*
- (2) Information on and metrics evaluating case outcomes; and*
- (3) A summary of the engagement and education of tenants.”¹*

MLSC is phasing in ACE over a three-year period, with a statutory goal of full implementation by October 1, 2025. The statute required MLSC to prioritize funding services in jurisdictions designating their own funds for eviction prevention legal services, and therefore the ACE program launched the first phase in eleven jurisdictions in FY23. In FY24, legal services expanded to the remaining jurisdictions across the state.

Case Statistics and Outcomes

The following data represent ACE cases closed during FY24. ACE expanded statewide during FY24 and legal services providers closed cases in every jurisdiction. Participating legal services providers closed 8,894 cases during FY24, representing a 124% increase over last year.² From these closed cases, the legal services providers helped Maryland residents receive more than \$650,000 in housing judgments and avoid more than \$6 million in direct costs. More than 14,000 people were directly affected and benefitted from the representation provided. Of those tenants who received full representation in FY24, 80% avoided disruptive displacement.

Type of Eviction	Cases
Failure to Pay Rent	7,854
Breach of Lease	314
Tenant Holding Over	488
Subsidy Termination	85
Other	153
Total	8,894

¹ MD Code, Real Property, § 8-907

² In FY23, participating legal services providers closed 3,973 cases.



County of Client Residence	Cases
Allegany County	25
Anne Arundel County	1,498
Baltimore City ³	1,731
Baltimore County	1,662
Calvert County	12
Caroline County	49
Carroll County	48
Cecil County	11
Charles County	222
Dorchester County	9
Frederick County	199
Garrett County	8
Harford County	253
Howard County	194
Kent County	21
Montgomery County	396
Prince George's County	2,188
Queen Anne's County	26
St. Mary's County	22
Somerset County	29
Talbot County	28
Washington County	191
Wicomico County	44
Worcester County	28
Total	8,894

Case Outcome	Cases ⁴
Prevented eviction from public or subsidized housing	574
Prevented eviction from other housing	2,444
Prevented termination of housing subsidy	43
Delayed eviction, providing time to either pay-and-stay or seek alternative housing	2,559
Prevented eviction filing	108
Prevented denial of public/subsidized housing tenant's rights	50

³ Does not include more than 650 cases closed under Baltimore City's Right to Counsel in Evictions program, which is separately funded by the City.

⁴ Some grantees report more than one benefit per case for some cases.



Avoided or obtained redress for illegal or unfair charges by landlord	218
Overcame denial of tenant's rights under lease	12
Enforced rights to decent, habitable housing	70
Obtained reasonable accommodation	24
Preserved or restored access to personal property	5
Obtained repairs to dwelling	17
Obtained cash-for-keys, relocation assistance or other tenant settlement	32
Obtained neutral reference from landlord	10
Obtained other benefit for tenant	142
Obtained advice or counseling (client may have declined full representation)	2,112
Obtained representation in litigation or administrative proceeding	980
Client withdrew/benefit unknown	12

Tenant Outreach and Education

During FY24, MLSC contracted with nine community groups to perform tenant outreach and education across the state. Outreach and education efforts were purposefully staggered behind the expansion of legal services so that legal providers could establish their services and ensure their capacity to serve new tenants referred by the outreach providers.

Outreach contractors met six times during FY24 to plan, develop shared messaging, and share best practices. The contractors use a variety of outreach methods – including door-knocking, tabling at community events, partnering with schools and libraries, digital marketing, and more – to inform tenants of their rights and of the existence of the ACE program. Through both targeted efforts and outreach at established community events, outreach contractors provided information to more than 115,000 tenants in FY24. The contractors have also established or strengthened relationships with the legal services providers to offer know-you-rights presentations and streamlined referrals.