

Senate Bill 544
**State Court Administrator - Warrants of Restitution and Writs of Possession -
Data Collection and Reporting**

Hearing before the Judicial Proceedings Committee, February 18, 2010

Position: SUPPORT

We, the undersigned, are researchers at the Johns Hopkins University Schools of Public Health and Medicine with expertise in the ways in which housing conditions impact human health. The views expressed here are our own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of Johns Hopkins University or Johns Hopkins Health System. **We urge the Committee's favorable report on SB 544.**

Forty-seven percent of renters in Maryland spend over thirty percent of their household's income on rent and 25% spend over half of their income on rent.¹ This cost burden means that little money remains for other household necessities, among them food and healthcare. It also means that any unanticipated shock to family finances can put a family at risk of eviction.

Public health practitioners have known for centuries that a person's housing conditions are an important driver of health, but the affordable housing crisis and subsequent mass displacement of families via eviction has given us unique and troubling insight into the extent to which housing insecurity impacts population health. Forced moves expose families to a tremendous amount of stress and material scarcity, while also disrupting their physical and social environments.

A growing body of research has linked eviction to mortality, adverse mental health and substance use-related outcomes (e.g., overdose), healthcare utilization, and infectious disease outcomes in adults.^{2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11} Evictions have also been documented to undermine future

¹ https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/ARH_2017_cost_burdens_by_state_total

² Vasquez-Vera H, Palencia L, Magna I, Mena C, Neira J, Borrell C. The threat of home eviction and its effects on health through the equity lens: a systematic review. *Soc Sci Med.* 2017;175:199–208.

³ Desmond M, Kimbro RT. Eviction's fallout: housing, hardship, and health. *Social Forces.* 2015;94(1):295–324.

⁴ Bradford, AC, Bradford, WD. The effect of evictions on accidental drug and alcohol mortality. *Health Serv Res.* 2020; 55: 9– 17.

⁵ Niccolai L, Blankenship K, Keene D. Eviction from Renter-Occupied Households and Rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections: A County-Level Ecological Analysis. *Sex Transm Dis.* 2018.

⁶ Damon W, McNeail R, Milloy M-J, Nosova E, Kerr T, Hayashi K. Residential eviction predicts initiation of or relapse into crystal methamphetamine use among people who inject drugs: a prospective cohort study. *J Public Health (Bangkok).* 2018. doi:10.1093/pubmed/fox187.

⁷ Kennedy MC, Kerr T, McNeil R, et al. Residential Eviction and Risk of Detectable Plasma HIV-1 RNA Viral Load Among HIV-Positive People Who Use Drugs. *AIDS Behav.* 2017. doi:10.1007/s10461-016-1315-z.

economic mobility of households, and disproportionately impact communities of color. In particular, the consequences of eviction for black women have been likened to the destabilizing impacts of incarceration on the health and wellbeing of black men.¹²

We are only beginning to understand the ways in which eviction affects children. A recent study estimated that 15% of children in US cities experience an eviction by age 15.¹³ Work from our group and others suggests that eviction may contribute to adverse birth outcomes such as low birth weight and preterm birth, food insecurity, and lead poisoning among children.^{14,15,16} Experiencing these kinds of health issues early in life has a lasting impact on children's health, development, and future prospects.

As researchers, we need state-wide data on evictions to identify the determinants of evictions and measure the impact that evictions may be having on the health of Maryland children and families. Such information will inform the development of interventions that prevent eviction and ameliorate the negative consequences of evictions. Without high quality, up-to-date, and *open* data on evictions (i.e. downloadable online, but stripped of tenant names and case numbers), we cannot gauge the magnitude of the problem in Maryland in absolute terms or relative to other states. Lack of data also limits our ability to track change over time in eviction rates, monitor where evictions are occurring, and identify communities that are disproportionately affected by evictions. Fellow health researchers have used data from Princeton's Eviction Lab and other sources to map evictions, identify modifiable determinants of eviction (e.g., housing code violations, unaffordable housing, inequitable development),^{17,18} and demonstrate that

⁸ Kennedy MC, McNeil R, Milloy MJ, Dong H, Kerr T, Hayashi K. Residential eviction and exposure to violence among people who inject drugs in Vancouver, Canada. *Int J Drug Policy*. 2017. doi:10.1016/j.drugpo.2016.12.017.

⁹ Pilarinos A, Kennedy MC, McNeil R, Dong H, Kerr T, DeBeck K. The association between residential eviction and syringe sharing among a prospective cohort of street-involved youth. *Harm Reduct J*. 2017. doi:10.1186/s12954-017-0150-5.

¹⁰ Rojas Y, Stenberg S-Å. Evictions and suicide: a follow-up study of almost 22,000 Swedish households in the wake of the global financial crisis. *J Epidemiol Community Health*. 2016;70(4):409-413. doi:10.1136/jech-2015-206419.

¹¹ Rojas Y. Evictions and short-term all-cause mortality: a 3-year follow-up study of a middle-aged Swedish population. *Int J Public Health*. 2017. doi:10.1007/s00038-016-0931-8.

¹² Desmond M. *Poor Black Women Are Evicted at Alarming Rates, Setting Off a Chain of Hardship*. MacArthur Foundation, 2014.

¹³ Lundberg I, Donnelly L. A Research Note on the Prevalence of Housing Eviction Among Children Born in American Cities. *Demography*.

¹⁴ Leifheit KM, Schwartz GL, Pollack CE, Black MM, Edin KJ, Althoff KN, Jennings JM. Eviction in early childhood and neighborhood poverty, food security, and obesity in later childhood and adolescence: Evidence from a longitudinal birth cohort. Under Review.

¹⁵ Leifheit KM, Schwartz GL, Pollack CE, Black MM, Edin KJ, Althoff KN, Jennings JM. Severe housing insecurity in pregnancy: Association with adverse birth outcomes and poor infant health. In preparation.

¹⁶ Schwartz GL, Leifheit KM, Berkman L, Arcaya M, Chen J. Is eviction poisonous? A survival analysis of eviction & lead poisoning in a national urban birth cohort. In Preparation

¹⁷ Antony Chum (2015) The impact of gentrification on residential evictions, *Urban Geography*, 36:7, 1083-1098

¹⁸ Desmond M. *Evicted: poverty and profit in the American city* 2016.

eviction rates, above and beyond population social and demographic factors, are able to explain geographic patterns and disparities in disease.⁵ Conducting these types of analyses with Maryland data might produce compelling evidence to support using social policies to reduce evictions and improve health equity across the state.

We support SB544 / HB797 because we know that evictions are taking a toll on Maryland families and their health. We see an urgent need to quantify the problem of evictions in our state so that we can work hand-in-hand with policymakers to prevent evictions, improve health, and promote social justice.

Signed,

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