



MARYLAND
LEGAL AID

Advancing
Human Rights and
Justice for All

For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Ashley Fails
afails@mdlab.org
443-651-0507

**“Human Rights in Maryland Rent Courts” Study Highlights Need for
More Access to Justice for Low-Income Marylanders**

BALTIMORE, Md., (September 20, 2016) – Maryland Legal Aid announces the release of “Human Rights in Maryland’s Rent Courts: A Statistical Study,” a review of Rent Court practices statewide. The Study examines a sample of rent court cases, covering every jurisdiction in Maryland.

Some of the issues identified in the Study include:

- **Errors in Failure to Pay Rent cases** (i.e., *Unclear, Insufficient or Incomplete Records* necessary for judges to make a definitive conclusion);
- Default judgments were entered against tenants even though some landlords did not meet their **Legal Obligations** to make a basic case for an eviction judgment;
- Tenants received **No Service or Improper Service** (i.e., adequate notice of legal claims and an opportunity to present defenses to their case in accordance with Maryland law).

With the cooperation of the Maryland Judiciary, Maryland Legal Aid was granted access to 1,380 Failure to Pay Rent court records in order to complete the study. Expert analysis was provided by the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences (AAAS) to ensure that sufficient data supported and validated the report’s findings. The findings offer opportunities for improvement in Maryland Rent Courts, where needed, with the objective of improving judicial administration of rent court cases, avoiding homelessness of tenants who should not have been evicted, and enhancing the overall fairness of the rent court process.

“A general rule of law is that Courts should disfavor evictions of residential tenants, and that strict compliance with legal requirements must be required for landlords seeking to evict,” says Shawn Boehringer, Maryland Legal Aid’s Chief Counsel. “Our report demonstrates that those requirements have not been satisfied in significant numbers of cases across the state. We appreciate the judiciary’s role in providing the data to compile the report, and we hope to continue to work in partnership with the judiciary to address the report’s findings.”

Maryland Legal Aid’s Human Rights Project spearheaded the Rent Court Study as part of the organization’s continued commitment to serve Maryland’s poor and marginalized individuals and families. The Study was supported by a grant from The Fund for Change (<http://www.thefundforchange.org>), and with assistance from the Maryland Judiciary.

Full Report: [Human Rights in Maryland’s Rent Courts: A Statistical Study](#) [PDF]

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About Maryland Legal Aid

Maryland Legal Aid is a private, non-profit law firm that provides free, civil legal services to low-income people in Baltimore City and Maryland's 23 counties from 12 offices and four District Court Self-Help Resource Centers. The firm handles cases involving a wide range of issues, including family, housing, government benefits, healthcare, education, employment, and consumer law. Maryland Legal Aid also represents children in CINA (Child in Need of Assistance) proceedings in 12 Maryland jurisdictions. Other vulnerable populations, such as homeowners facing foreclosure, migrant and seasonal farm workers, nursing home and assisted living residents, and veterans seeking benefits and assistance with related legal issues also receive representation through special projects. In addition, Maryland Legal Aid assists with expunging criminal records to remove barriers to obtaining housing, employment, and child custody.

For more information, visit www.mdlab.org and follow Maryland Legal Aid on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).