

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 729

(Senator Henson)

Judicial Proceedings

Judiciary

Real Property - Access to Counsel in Evictions Program - Expansion

This bill expands the Access to Counsel in Evictions (ACE) Program administered by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC) to include residents of mobile home parks.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any potential operational impact to the ACE Program is not anticipated to materially affect State expenditures. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local government operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill makes numerous changes to statutory provisions related to the ACE Program to include residents of mobile home parks as eligible recipients of services. This includes altering the definition of “covered individual” to include an individual who occupies the premises of a mobile home park under Title 8A of the Real Property. The ACE program must provide for access to legal representation in specific actions for repossession under Title 8A, Subtitle 17 of the Real Property Article.

The bill makes other conforming changes to the responsibilities of MLSC to reflect the inclusion of mobile home park residents, including:

- requiring the existing informational pamphlet to describe the legal rights of and available resources for tenants and *residents*;

- requiring MLSC to designate and contract with community groups to conduct outreach and provide education to *residents* regarding their rights and access to legal representation under the program; and
- incorporating information about mobile home park residents who receive services under the program within MLSC's required annual report.

The bill also requires a sheriff or constable, in addition to other existing requirements, to provide a copy of the pamphlet when providing service in an action for repossession under Title 8A, Subtitle 17 of the Real Property Article.

Current Law: Chapter 746 of 2021 established the ACE Program that is administered by MLSC. The ACE Program was created to organize and direct services and resources in order to provide individuals meeting certain criteria with access to legal representation in specified judicial or administrative proceedings to evict or terminate a tenancy or housing subsidy. Chapter 746 also required that access to legal representation be phased in over time as MLSC deems appropriate, with the goal of full implementation before October 1, 2025.

In addition to other responsibilities, MLSC is required to develop an informational pamphlet and report, annually by August 31, to the Governor and the General Assembly on (1) the number of covered individuals provided legal representation during the previous calendar year; (2) information on and metrics evaluating case outcomes; and (3) a summary of the engagement and education of tenants.

State Expenditures: While the bill expands eligibility for services under the ACE Program, there is no anticipated impact on expenditures, as it is assumed that the program uses any available funding each year to provide services to as many covered individuals as possible. Under the bill, such individuals may include residents of mobile home parks.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: HB 1571 (Delegate Holmes) - Judiciary.

Information Source(s): Office of the Attorney General; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of Housing and Community Development; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History:
caw/jkb

First Reader - March 4, 2026

Third Reader - March 24, 2026

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