



City of Takoma Park, Maryland

7500 Maple Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912
www.takomaparkmd.gov

Testimony Concerning SB 544 “State Court Administrator – Warrants of Restitution and Writs of Possession – Data Collection and Reporting Submitted to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee February 17, 2020

Position: Support

Contact: Grayce Wiggins, Housing and Community Development Manager
graycew@takomaparkmd.gov – 301-891-7119

The City of Takoma Park strongly supports SB 544, which would require the State Court Administrator to collect, maintain, provide certain access to, and, beginning on or before a certain date, make and publish a quarterly report in a certain manner on certain information related to certain warrants of restitution and writs of possession. This bill will allow cities and counties across the State of Maryland, to obtain critical data that will inform their approach to addressing evictions.

The City of Takoma Park is a densely developed, largely residential municipality of almost 18,000 people living within 2.4 square miles in Montgomery County, Maryland. The City’s residential housing stock is about half multi-family rental buildings and half single-family detached homes. In October 2019, the City Council passed an aggressive Housing and Economic Development Strategic Plan which offers a coordinated approach to move Takoma Park towards a “Livable Community for All” for this and future generations.

A significant goal under this Plan is to address the critical housing needs of residents and their need for stable housing. The City of Takoma Park is attempting to comprehensively address these needs and to prevent homelessness. Through a City Council appropriation, an Emergency Assistance Fund was created to assist tenants and homeowners facing eviction with money to cure outstanding balances. We have been successful in preventing evictions for many of our residents and have developed strategies and strong partnerships with Montgomery County, State agencies, and nonprofit organizations to begin to address the root causes that lead to eviction. Further, we work closely with property owners (landlords), who are often small business owners, who welcome our strategic approach.

However, we have no uniform eviction data or centralized source that would enable us to address systemic issues, appropriately allocate funding, or establish policies that support greater stability in housing. The displacement of families due to eviction has devastating effects on every member of the household. Access to the limited data points proposed in SB 544 will provide our City and other municipalities with the tools necessary to effectively serve our residents.

The City of Takoma Park urges your favorable consideration of SB 544