



Legislative Debrief: 2025

At a time when economic protections and policies to promote racial equity are being decimated, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is currently on life support, Maryland's General Assembly passed some great bills, some good bills, and some very bad bills for working families. Below are some of the bills that Economic Action Maryland Fund was thrilled to lead and support.

The Great: Medical Debt

In 2023, 14% of Maryland households (or 327,600 households) had unaffordable medical debt that they could not pay. Outpatient health providers and services are the cause of medical debt for 44% of households (or 144,144), while 23% (or 75,348) have medical debt from a hospital visit, and 30% (or 108,108) households hold medical debt from both outpatient and hospital care. Three new bills will help patients with hospital and outpatient medical debt.

- **HB268/SB981 Hospital Financial Assistance and Debt Policies:** (Del. Lorig Charkoudian, Sen. Steve Hershey) establishes consistent income thresholds and consistent discounts for reduced-cost care for patients that qualify for financial assistance. It also prohibits hospitals from suing patients for medical debt of \$500 or below—which will protect 3066 patients a year from lawsuits and **makes Maryland the second state in the country to enact such a ban!**
- **HB438/SB349 Medical Debt Real Property Liens:** (Del. Elizabeth Embry, Sen. Sara Love) prohibits a lien on a first home for any outpatient medical debt. No one should be unable to refinance or get home repair loans or credit because they or a loved one fell ill.
- **HB1020/SB614 The Fair Medical Debt Reporting Act:** (Del. Julie Palakovich-Carr, Sen. Clarence Lam) prohibits outpatient medical debt from being adversely reported to credit agencies. Marylanders will not see their credit score fall because they sought healthcare for themselves or a loved one.

Still to come: We will continue to work to include health care credit cards like Care.com, which are aggressively marketed to consumers and have high interest rates.

The Good: Energy

As Maryland families grapple with skyrocketing bills, Economic Action supported bills that, in time, will lead to lower rates for customers.

- **HB960 The Ratepayer Freedom Act** (Del. Andre Johnson) was folded into the House and Senate leadership energy package. The Act prohibits investor-owned utility companies from passing on the costs of their trade association fees and their private jets onto their customers. **Maryland is the fourth state in the country to pass these reforms which, in other states, have saved ratepayers hundreds of thousands of dollars.**
- Aspects of **HB419 The Ratepayer Protection Act** (Del. Elizabeth Embry) was also included in the energy package. Now, utilities will have to demonstrate a customer benefit to justify multi-year rate plans.

The Good: Housing

Renters and homeowners are struggling with the high costs of staying in their home. In Maryland, [26%](#) or 196,936 of renters are very low-income while Maryland homeowners have the [fourth](#) highest foreclosure filings in the nation. Two new bills advance our housing agenda, although much work remains unfinished.

- **HB796/SB56 Foreclosure Filing Fee:** (Del. Jeffrey Long, Sen. Charles Sydnor) raises the foreclosure filing fee \$150 per filing to increase funding for housing counselors, financial literacy organizations and others that are working to keep tenants and homeowners in their homes.
- **HB767/SB442:** (Del. Jen Terrasa, Sen. Charles Sydnor) provides tenants with clear notice about the timeline for their eviction. While this is a positive step forward for tenants it is far weaker than the original bill, which was originally named the Tenant Possession Recovery Act and protected renters' personal possessions from being thrown out onto the curb after an eviction. The bill was weakened in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee so that tenants now will have notice of their pending eviction but may still face the humiliation and indignity of having their possessions tossed onto a sidewalk.

The Good: Consumer Protection

- **HB431/SB413 Consumer Protection-Consumer Contracts:** (Del. Vaughn Stewart, Sen Jeff Waldstreicher) expands consumer protections in contracts, stating that if a contract sets a shorter timeline to bring an action than under law it is void. The original bill stated that violations of the act are a violation of the Maryland Consumer Protection Act but this enforcement mechanism was removed in the Senate.

The Bad

- **HB1516/SB1026 Maryland Secondary Market Act:** (Del. Pam Queen, Sen. Pam Beidle at the request of Governor Moore's Office of Financial Regulation) creates a category of passive trusts for secondary mortgages that will be exempt from registration, licensing, regulation, or enforcement. This law is a boon for companies like Rocket Mortgage which was recently sued by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) for illegal kickbacks. Advocates were able to strike language that would have rolled back consumer protections for a whole range of credit products. That language was eliminated from the bill, although concerns remain that the legislation will enable zombie mortgages to flourish and new products may emerge to skirt the loophole that has been created.
- **HB1294 Earned Wage Access:** (Del. C.T. Wilson and Del. Marlon Amprey) legalizes costly fintech payday loans in which consumers pay fees and optional tips to borrow their own money before payday. The fees and tips will likely exceed Maryland's decades old 33% rate cap. If signed into law, this will make Maryland the first state that has maintained a 33% rate cap to protect working families from payday lenders to authorize these fintech payday loans, setting a bad national precedent and rolling back decades of Maryland law.

Good bills that passed one chamber but did not make it through the opposite chamber:

- **HB392/SB107 Fair Housing Testing:** (Del. Sandy Bartlett, Sen Charles Sydnor) would improve Maryland's ability to root out discrimination in housing by allowing one-party recordings for fair housing testing. This is the recommended best practice by HUD. 39 other states allow one-party audio recording to determine if there is housing discrimination based on race, gender, sexual identity, disability or more.
- **HB769/SB682 Residential Foreclosures:** (Del Dana Jones, Sen. Charles Sydnor) would have created a statute of limitations for foreclosure, bringing Maryland in line with 47 other states. The statute of limitations would have been for 10 years, bringing Maryland in line with Virginia and surrounding states. It also would have required documentation if someone was trying to foreclose on a home after sending no statements for a period of time (known as a zombie mortgage foreclosure).
- **HB332/SB659 Elder Fraud Prevention Act of 2025:** (Del. Vaughn Stewart, Sen. Justin Ready) would have created new protections related to scams and wire fraud.

Priority bills that did not advance in either chamber:

- **HB709/SB651 Good Cause Evictions:** (Del. Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Sen. Anthony Muse) would have prohibited landlords from evicting tenants without a valid reason for terminating or refusing to renew the lease.

Economic Action's small but mighty policy team weighed in on 83 bills with written or oral testimony, led advocacy efforts on eight of the bills above, and supported the other bills led by our partner organizations and coalitions. This is a critical time for economic rights, housing justice, and racial equity across the country and in Maryland where families are facing a cost-of-living crisis that is likely to increase as we brace for a possible recession. Thanks to our engaged and active supporters, our partners, and legislative champions, we achieved progressive policy wins and will continue to fight for critical reforms.

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