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Homeless Persons Representation Project Opens New Office in Montgomery County

*Nonprofit provider of civil legal aid to persons experiencing homelessness is expanding to
Montgomery and Prince George's counties*

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND – While Montgomery County is Maryland's most affluent county, it also has the second highest rate of homelessness in the state. While the county has committed to ending chronic homelessness, there is a critical need for legal services to break down legal barriers to stable housing, employment and other regular sources of income.

To help address that urgent need, the Homeless Persons Representation Project (HPRP) has opened a new office in Rockville, Maryland, to better provide free legal services to people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in the area. The nonprofit, headquartered in Baltimore City, will provide expanded services to help more people in both Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

According to the 2017 Point-in-Time Count, Montgomery County had nearly 900 homeless people, and Prince George's County had more than 520 homeless people – including many families. The high cost of housing in the two counties is a driving force behind the high rate of homelessness and those who struggle to pay the rent. Half of all renters in both counties struggle to afford rent – paying more than 30 percent of their income in rent.

“Only lawyers can remove legal barriers to benefits, education, employment, housing, treatment and services,” said Amy E. Horton-Newell, chair of the Montgomery County Interagency Commission on Homelessness & Poverty and director of the American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness & Poverty. “The Homeless Persons Representation Project will provide critical legal assistance that will ultimately assist our county's Continuum of Care goals to improve outcomes for our most vulnerable neighbors. This collaboration will yield concrete results.”

Montgomery County has set several goals around ending homelessness, including ending veteran homelessness by 2016, ending chronic homelessness by 2017 and setting a path to end all types of homelessness in the county. Many homeless people need additional support to maintain stable housing, prompting the decision by HPRP to open the new Montgomery office.

“It is good news that the Homeless Persons Representation Project has expanded services here in the county,” said Uma S. Ahluwalia, director of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services. “Ending homelessness in Montgomery County is everyone’s work. Ensuring that individuals experiencing homelessness have access to legal help is very important to ensure that by resolving their legal issues we will improve their access to much needed services and resources. We are pleased for the partnership.”

HPRP has been working to end homelessness in Maryland since 1987. HPRP relies on both volunteer and staff attorneys to provide legal services around general civil matters, public benefits, and record expungement. Over the past three decades, HPRP has received numerous awards for its work advocating for the legal needs of people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. In 2014, HPRP received the Award for Legal Excellence in the Advancement of the Rights of the Disadvantaged from the Maryland Bar Association. And, in 2017, the American Bar Association selected HPRP’s Homeless Youth Initiative as a Model Project.

“Homelessness is a solvable injustice in our society,” said Antonia K. Fasanelli, executive director of the Homeless Person Representation Project. “HPRP appreciates the county’s commitment to ending homelessness and is honored to use its expertise to help achieve this goal. Our expansion is possible because of our strong partners in the county government, nonprofit community, law firms and our amazing legal volunteers.”

The Miles & Stockbridge law firm donated the new office space in Rockville. With the new office, HPRP has hired an attorney director to manage the expanded case load. The additional office and staff will enable HPRP to recruit more volunteer attorneys, offer additional legal clinics throughout the county and champion policy solutions to homelessness.

Since 1989, HPRP has been operating a free legal clinic at Shepherd’s Table in Silver Spring, which is open the first Wednesday and third Friday of every month. After opening its Rockville office in April 2017, HPRP has added an additional legal clinic at the Home Builder’s Care Assessment Center operated by the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless in Rockville and is working with partners to set up more. To celebrate the expansion, HPRP will host a welcome reception on September 27 at the offices of Choice Hotels International in Rockville.

The [Homeless Persons Representation Project](#) (HPRP) is Maryland's only legal services and advocacy organization dedicated to eliminating homelessness. Our staff and volunteers provide free legal services, including advice, counsel, education, representation and advocacy, for low-income people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Pursuing systemic solutions to homelessness is also a critical part of HPRP's work.