

# The Homeless Persons Representation Project

## Using the Law to End Homelessness in Maryland

### Targeted Legal Services

HPRP is the only civil legal aid organization in Maryland focused on ending homelessness. HPRP targets its legal work on the primary causes of homelessness - lack of permanent affordable housing and lack of income sufficient to pay for housing.

### Community-based Approach

HPRP staff and volunteers conduct outreach and meet with people who are facing homelessness in shelters, soup kitchens, community-based associations, and on the street to provide legal representation.

### Education and Advocacy

HPRP staff offer forums in the community for clients, service providers, and others on legal issues confronting people facing homelessness. HPRP staff address systemic hurdles to ending homelessness, including improving government services, programs and laws, with knowledge derived from client experiences.

## HPRP in Action

**Access to Public Benefits Project:** HPRP represents families and individuals in obtaining public benefits, income they rely on to pay for housing, health care, food, and child care.

**HPRP makes a difference:** *HPRP met Ms. B at a shelter for families experiencing homelessness after the Department of Social Services (DSS) had unlawfully denied her application for Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA). According to DSS, Ms. B was required to attend a work activity program even though she was experiencing homelessness and did not have child care for her three young children. HPRP successfully represented Ms. B in a hearing and the judge ordered DSS to approve her TCA and issue her back benefits. As soon as DSS re-opened her case, it terminated her benefits again for the exact same reason. HPRP represented Ms. B in a total of five separate appeals, all of which resolved in Ms. B's favor., resulting in \$8,116 in back TCA benefits and \$811 in ongoing monthly benefits. Ms. B was able to move out of the shelter into a rapid rehousing program and enroll her children in Head Start. Once she had child care and stable housing, she was able to attend a work activity program, and found a job.*

**Housing Justice Project:** Recognizing that housing is the major solution to homelessness, HPRP represents families and individuals in their attempts to move out of shelters and into permanent housing.

**HPRP makes a difference:** *Ms. T, pregnant and sleeping in her car, moved into transitional housing, with the promise that at the end of the 24-month program she would be referred for Housing Choice Voucher, which would give her permanent housing. But, after completing the program, Ms. T was given a notice to vacate within 30 days, without the Voucher referral. HPRP successfully represented Ms. T both at a hearing to obtain her Voucher and to defend her against the the housing program eviction. As a result, Ms. T and her new-born daughter were able to move into permanent housing and Ms. T was able to a job with Amazon.*

**Clean Slate Project:** Criminal records pose a significant barrier to the ability of people facing homelessness to access housing and employment. HPRP works to eliminate barriers to employment and housing by representing people facing homelessness in proceedings to expunge records of non-convictions and convictions for nuisance offenses.

**HPRP makes a difference:** *A 61-year-old Baltimore City man now has a job and is on his way to ending his homelessness after his HPRP pro-bono attorney successfully had his criminal record expunged. His attorney successfully had two charges and an uninsured vehicle traffic offense removed from the gentleman's record. The charges came off just before a job interview, and he got the job.*

## Who is HPRP?

HPRP has a staff of 9 attorneys who work with over 500 volunteer attorneys, paralegals and law students to provide legal services, education and advocacy to prevent and eliminate homelessness. HPRP handles over 1,200 client matters each year.