



Friends,

I'm writing to you today to bring your attention to an urgent community need.

Beyond Shelter Frederick (BSF) has been a conduit for eviction prevention for many years. Prior to COVID, the organization provided various levels of prevention assistance, awarding roughly \$250,000 per year in grant funding to roughly 500 individual households. In response to the pandemic, BSF, then named The Religious Coalition, became the primary pass through for the federal funding designated for Emergency Rental Assistance Programs (ERAP) that has kept many households stable over the last 4 years.

We are soon to return to pre-pandemic levels of local Eviction Prevention.

For the last 14 months, BSF has awarded nearly \$2.8 million in emergency eviction prevention to over 800 separate households. Through a transitional program initiated and funded by the previous county government administration, ERAP continued to operate after many other jurisdictions' prevention programs ended.

The current reality is that with less than 3 weeks remaining in the program there have been no additional resources identified to keep the current level of prevention programs funded. While we've always known the program cycle would end, it's been our hope to locate additional resources to maintain a robust program after the bulk of federal funding was depleted. Unfortunately, this has not occurred.

The sunseting of eviction prevention is problematic for several reasons. Most notably, the need has not diminished. We service on any given week, **30-40 new** requests and many of these cases require several thousands of dollars to resolve. It is not uncommon to applicants owe \$5000+ per case, and with average rents topping \$1500, the frequency of these cases shows no sign of slowing.

Rent Court and Evictions Statistics for Frederick County (stats provided by FCSO):

Full Year 2023	
Rent Court Filings	7985
Eviction Papers Filed	1679

Jan 1 st - May 1 st '24	
Rent Court Filings	3044*
Eviction Papers Filed	546

*Represents 500 more filings than 2023 thru the same timeframe

Along with record setting numbers of court papers filed so far this year, it should come as no surprise that Frederick County is experiencing a rental housing crisis. The outcome of this ripples into many factors for an affected household, but the first and most concerning outcome is homelessness. A perfect storm swirls with low vacancy rates of affordable rentals, increasingly rising rents, an inability to control those rents, and an incongruence between population growth and affordable housing growth.

These factors left unchecked will lead to the inevitable increase in Frederick County homelessness.

For many families, for senior citizens, for individuals, for those barely holding on, Frederick has become an unsustainable place to live. Those obstacles, coupled with the significant loss of the eviction prevention safety net, predict a bleak future for the impoverished residents of the county. Once those folks reach the street, reach the parks, there will be calls for solutions, with little to provide.

Alarmingly, we look west to Washington County, who's post-COVID emergency rental programming ended in 2023. Prior to COVID, Washington County's Coordinated Entry list (a list of vulnerable and unhoused needing assistance) rarely topped 100 individuals. Since the end of their rental programming, that list has surpassed 200 individuals and is currently rising. Local WashCo organizations are tracking roughly 200 **additional** individuals deemed likely to become unhoused and vulnerable with little to no ability to stabilize them. Once known as a regular destination for those who could not afford Frederick rents, Washington County is now becoming unaffordable for their residents who must now look for yet another place that provides affordability. Speaking from the front lines in the fight against poverty, what's happening there should serve as a cautionary tale for Frederick.

As a native resident of this county and as the Executive Director of a nonprofit, my hope for Frederick is that we continue to be a place to call home for all who wish to live, work, and thrive here. In a perfect Frederick world, affluence and influence should neatly fold into its social conscience and it is clear that we need all who care about this community to become advocates for the continued support of its human services programming.

We implore all who receive this letter to help us seek alternate paths away from homelessness, continue to support expanded emergency eviction prevention and continue to advocate for those in need. Whether a funder, a donor, government official, or a philanthropist, we need your help to create an equitable Frederick for all.

As always, Beyond Shelter Frederick remains available for further discussions to forge solutions.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nick Brown', written in a cursive style.

Nick Brown
Executive Director
Beyond Shelter Frederick, Inc