

Maryland ABCD Network Legislative Agenda 2012

Maryland Asset Building and Community Development (ABCD) Network is a coalition of community based nonprofit and local government agencies and their supporters. During the 2012 session, the Network will follow bills in the General Assembly to inform our members of actions that may affect our members and the people and communities they serve. Our work falls into broad categories, as follows:

Supporting decent housing that is affordable across the income spectrum.

We are excited about the Governor's announcement of \$15 million in appropriations to leverage tax credits and bond funding for the ***Rental Housing Works Initiative***, which will create both jobs and quality affordable housing, and we strongly support this effort to aid Marylanders as part of the 2012 budget.

We support the ***Maryland HOME Act***, which would prohibit landlords from discriminating against persons seeking housing based on their source of income.

Our members in areas with substantial inventory of older homes are concerned about a recent court case removing ***liability limits on lead paint cases***. We look forward to actions that fully protect children from lead paint while at the same time protect established neighborhoods from disinvestment.

Protecting Families and neighborhoods from the ravages of foreclosure.

We support efforts by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to reform ***the foreclosure process*** and encourage mediation. Studies demonstrate the effectiveness of ***nonprofit housing counseling programs***, and we support targeted funding and regulations to ensure counseling is available throughout the state.

We support efforts to ***reduce blight, and to encourage responsible redevelopment***, particularly by community based nonprofits, and support bills that move these efforts forward.

Protecting Assets of Lower Income Families.

Lower income families often use rent-to-own businesses and pay alarmingly high prices for their merchandise. We support legislation to cap the interest rates, mark-ups, and ***consumer protections on Rent-To-Own contracts***.

We continue to support a bill ***allowing the Maryland Automobile Insurance Fund (MAIF) installment payments***, which allows its customers to budget their auto insurance expense, allowing more families to obtain transportation to support employment.

Allowing all Marylanders a chance for economic success.

One in four adults have a criminal record, and it can create overwhelming barrier to the job market. To address this concern, we support two bills:

"Ban the Box" would remove the checkbox on State employment applications asking if the applicant if they have ever been convicted of a crime, so that they can instead be able to explain in an interview or background check instead of being rejected at the outset.

Similarly, the ***Shielding of Nonviolent Convictions*** would shield from some prospective employers nonviolent convictions after three or five years while keeping the records full available to law enforcement.

Maintaining funding that supports people in need, allows individual asset growth, and supports affordable housing and community revitalization.