



**For Immediate Release**  
**Friday, May 17, 2024**

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## **LDF Applauds Maryland Legislature's Passage of Laws Advancing Racial Justice**

Yesterday, Governor Wes Moore of Maryland signed [HB732/SB894](#) into law, which is the second to last step to give the Baltimore City Council legislative authority over the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD). For 160 years, the BPD was under state control. The bill signing caps the state's legislative session, which ushered in the passage of key pieces of policy impacting the lives of Black residents.

In addition to the signing of HB 732/SB894, several other vital pieces of legislation were enacted to protect renters, including: [SB19](#), which requires the Maryland District Court to shield all court records within 60 days related to a failure to pay rent that did not result in an eviction; and [HB1117](#), otherwise known as the Tenant Safety Act, which provides tenants a pathway to secure the repair of serious and dangerous defects in their home and to obtain relief from the courts if these defects are not repaired.

This session also saw the defeat of [HB243](#), a bill that would have exacerbated existing housing instability. The [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) testified in opposition to this bill, which would have allowed Baltimore City to sell renter-occupied and other residential properties to collect unpaid water and sewer bills of more than \$350.

“This year, Maryland’s legislature passed a host of laws that will advance racial and economic justice by codifying renter protections, and at long last, advance Baltimore City Council’s powers to provide oversight of their police department. Every other jurisdiction in the Maryland has local control over their police departments,” said **LDF Associate Director-Counsel Tona Boyd**. “We are also encouraged that HB243 was defeated, as it placed families at risk of losing their homes due to water debt. LDF has long drawn attention to the [water affordability crisis in America’s cities](#) and filed a class-action lawsuit in Cleveland, Ohio on behalf of Black residents challenging the practice of placing liens on properties due to non-payment of water bills. The actions undertaken this legislative session will have an important and positive impact on access to housing in Maryland. Additionally, following 160 years of state control, we are gratified that Maryland voters will have the opportunity to decide whether to return local control of the Baltimore City Police Department to the people of Baltimore.”

“At a time when Black plurality localities around the country are facing a rollback of locally passed laws by the state, and just days after the U.S. House passed a law to limit D.C.’s ability to amend their own criminal sentencing laws, we are thrilled to see the Maryland General Assembly move in the opposite direction and pass SB 894/HB 732, and to witness Governor Wes Moore sign this bill into law. For more than a decade, Baltimore City residents have pushed both at the local and state level for their City Council to have local legislative control over the Baltimore City Police Department to increase Baltimore City residents’ participation in the oversight and accountability of a city-operated department. This marks the penultimate step in restoring local control,” said **LDF Senior Policy Associate Kristina Roth**. “Now the fate of this process lies in the hands of Baltimore voters to ratify an amendment to the city’s charter this November. Given a prior charter amendment to advance this process of local control was supported by 82% of voters, we hope this is a forgone conclusion.”

“We are encouraged that the Maryland General Assembly passed multiple pieces of legislation that will have a lasting impact on housing and racial justice in Maryland. We are also deeply relieved that the tax sale bill, HB 243, failed to pass. That legislation would have resulted in further housing instability and evictions for Baltimore renters,” said **LDF Economic Justice Fellow David Wheaton**. “We call on the General Assembly next year to fully pass ‘Just Cause’ eviction protection legislation, which aims to prevent retaliatory or discriminatory evictions.”

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*Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.*