

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Preparing for state’s COVID-19 recovery, Maryland Access to Justice Commission releases a public story map tool for analyzing civil justice issues

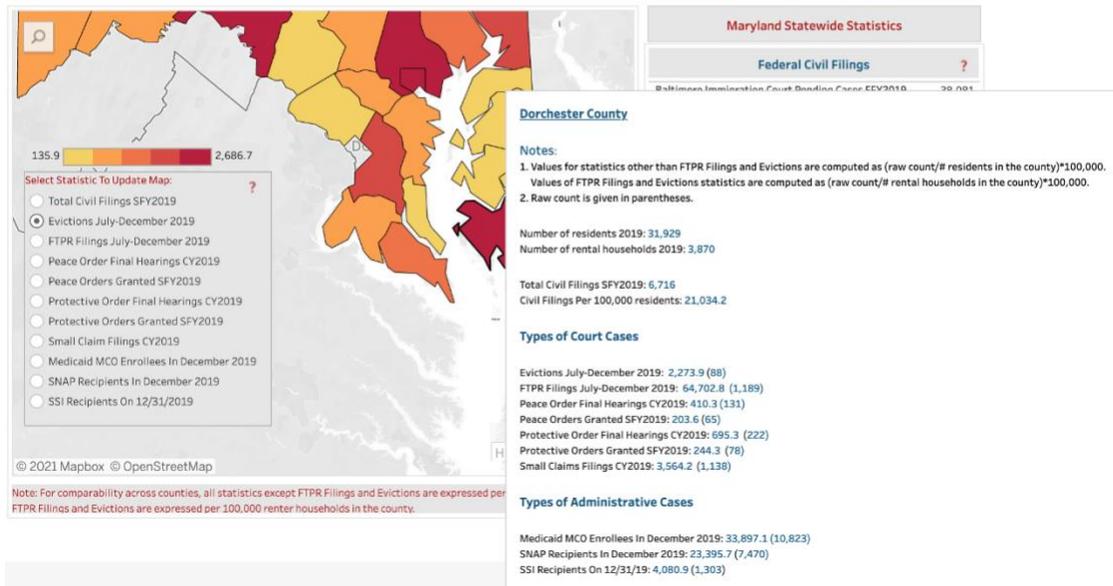
Data is relevant to current civil justice legislation moving thru the Maryland General Assembly

(Baltimore, MD) March 11, 2021 - The [Maryland Access to Justice Commission \(A2JC\)](#), supported by the Maryland State Bar Association, has created an interactive story map for legislators and elected officials, media, civil justice advocates, community leaders, and the public. The story map allows users to dissect the topics of and data surrounding civil justice issues - like evictions, debt and abuse - related to the pandemic statewide and county-by-county. Entitled, "[Civil Justice for All: An Essential Part of COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery](#)," the multimedia presentation combines text, pictures, graphics, statistics, personal accounts, data, and interactive maps.

"This story map is a product of the work of the [COVID-19 Access to Justice Task Force](#), a partnership between the Office of the Maryland Attorney General and A2JC," says Reena Shah, executive director, A2JC. "The story map addresses the dearth of civil justice data – which in itself is a barrier to achieving civil justice for all. This tool will assist anyone who wants civil justice data at their fingertips. It will help guide policy decisions and alert community members, advocates and decision-makers about the civil legal needs faced by their communities."

Marylanders' Interaction with the Civil Justice System

Marylanders interact with the civil justice system through cases in federal and state courts as well as at federal and state administrative agencies. You can find statewide data on the right and search and manipulate the interactive map to find county-specific data on different types of civil justice actions affecting Marylanders.



The 19-page presentation (<https://www.mdaccesstojustice.org/storymap>) describes COVID-19 impacts on basic human needs in Maryland, such as housing, health and food. The story map addresses pre-pandemic barriers to civil justice, such as not knowing where to find help, not understanding the law, and not having access to free or reduced-fee legal assistance. Users can “click” on any Maryland county to find facts and figures about Marylanders’ interaction with the civil justice system in areas such as eviction, bankruptcy, failure to pay rent, protective orders, and small claims filings. *For instance, in 2019, Dorchester County had one of the highest rates of evictions compared to other Maryland counties. (Interactive map pictured above.)* The story map contains the most recent civil justice information available.

About Maryland Access to Justice Commission

The [Maryland Access to Justice Commission](#) (A2JC), established in 2015, is an independent entity that unites leaders to drive systemic reforms and innovations to make the civil justice system accessible, equitable and fair for all Marylanders. In partnership with the Maryland State Bar Association and a high-level Task Force with the Attorney General, A2JC’s purpose during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond is to be an aggregator of civil justice system information, a communicator to the public and civil legal-aid community, and a thought-leader. A2JC’s partners include the deans of the state’s law schools, the Maryland attorney general, law firm partners, corporate counsel, heads of legal services

organizations and funders, academics, and representatives from the Maryland Judiciary and the Maryland State Bar Association.

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