



# EVICTIION PREVENTION COLLABORATION

## Clinics Collaborate to Provide Eviction Prevention Project

By Andrew Faught

**O**N A ZOOM FEED freighted with the nervous words of an interpreter, Kyle Keraga '21 listened as clients, many of them undocumented Latin American immigrants, voiced worries about losing housing because of COVID-related job losses, struggles to find childcare, or unscrupulous landlords.

“Universally, they were scared,” recalls Keraga, one of more than 50 students who took part in Maryland Carey Law’s Eviction Prevention Project (EPP). “None of the circumstances is easy to deal with, and they’re only made harder by the fact that a deadly virus was spreading through their community.”

The Eviction Prevention Project, which operated during the 2020-2021 academic year, is a collaboration among Maryland Carey Law’s Public Health Law, Fair Housing, Medical-Legal Partnership, and Mediation clinics and the University of Maryland,

Baltimore School of Social Work. Working in Prince George’s County and Baltimore City, the program reached around 150 clients worried about losing shelter at the height of the pandemic.

Students typically provided “quick-hit” legal advice sessions for clients, according to Kerri Lowrey '99, deputy director and director for grants and research for the Network for Public Health Law, Eastern Region, based at the law school, who led the collaboration. They also went to court, helping two clients negotiate a move-out date, one to have his case dismissed, and expunging an eviction from another’s record, which makes it easier for them to rent in the future. Others drafted policy briefs on eviction diversion, deterring serial eviction filings, limiting public access to eviction records, and right to counsel, and presented a nationwide webinar on these issues. Keraga was one of four students who testified in the Maryland General Assembly and Baltimore City Council hearings on housing-related bills.

In many cases, Lowrey says, there is little legal recourse for those facing eviction: “So much of it is just listening to people and hearing them out and empathizing with their situation, while helping them navigate the process and secure the best possible outcome.” The program, she notes, also benefitted student participants because it showed them the human ramifications of lawyering.

“This was a really tangible way for students to make a difference in the world,” Lowrey says. “I’m hoping that the students who were involved in this project, even if they go on to work in a big firm, keep this experience in the back of their heads—that they developed some working knowledge of the inequities out there, and that they can do pro bono work in some capacity to serve people.”

It’s a mindset that resonates with Keraga. Before enrolling at Maryland Carey Law, he was the state coordinator for Our Revolution Maryland, a community organization that advocates in part for permanent affordable housing and unionized jobs that pay fair and livable wages.

Keraga says he entered law school drawn to public interest work and could not pass up taking part in a public health-related clinic during a global public health crisis.

“I wanted an experience that was about helping people deal with their problems and standing up for the little guy,” he says. “The EPP and Public Health Law Clinic gave me that experience. I learned the bread and butter of being a lawyer, and I was glad that we were able to help people through some of the most difficult periods of their lives.” ■