



**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES**  
*Maryland's Social Services Agency*



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**For more information:**

Paula Tolson  
410-767-7758  
[ptolson@dhr.state.md.us](mailto:ptolson@dhr.state.md.us)

**DHR EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES FIRST HAND THE PLIGHT OF HOMELESSNESS**

**BALTIMORE** – A period of economic insecurity, debt, and an everyday occurrence collided and turned life upside down for single mom Tonya Bullock. Ms. Bullock has always worked. She was employed by the Department of Human Resources on the Helpdesk. The military veteran and mother of two have struggled in recent years, but so have a lot of working class families. It was the confluence of events that took her from struggling to desperate.

“I had bills to pay, plus I was dealing with a wage garnishment,” said Bullock. Then the decision by her property owner not to renew her lease tipped the scales. These seemingly unrelated events left this mother and her children homeless. In Maryland, more than one in four homeless persons, (26.9 percent) are children between the ages of 0 to 17.

The lack of affordable housing is a core cause of homelessness. Thirty-two percent of Maryland, households are renters. Increasing rents, destruction of traditional low-income housing, and cuts in federal housing programs threaten affordable housing with extinction, according to the National Law Center on Homeless and Poverty.

While not alone, families with young children now account for 40 percent of the nation's homeless population and in the course of the year, more than 1.3 million children are homeless.

Despite the difficulty of Ms. Bullock's situation, she was most concerned with her children's education. She was struggling with finding a way for her son to continue his education and not uproot him from the stability of his school.

Like many everyday citizens, she found it difficult to navigate the bureaucracy and advocate for herself and her son. She reached out to the Public Justice Center, and with their assistance won a class action lawsuit against Baltimore County schools protecting the educational rights of homeless children and youth.

Ms. Bullock was able to bring stability to her son at a time when they did not have a place to call

home. Fortunately, after several months of living in one of Baltimore County's homeless shelters for families, she stabilized her housing situation. She plans to purchase a home in the spring.

She volunteers with the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty to give back and help others as a board member and as a member of the Fund Development and Strategic Planning committees. Ms. Bullock is the recipient of their prestigious McKinney-Vento Personal Achievement award for her leadership in advancing solutions to end homelessness and poverty. She also received the Courage award from Congressman John Sarbanes for her tenacity and determination in her fight for the rights of homeless children.

When asked what this period of her life taught her, she said, "Put pride aside. Homelessness can happen to anyone. That was a season in my life. It wasn't nor does it dictate my destiny."

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The Maryland Department of Human Resources is the state's social service provider. The agency collaborates with 24 local jurisdictions to: provide foster care, adoption and protective services to children; collect and distribute child support payments; and provide temporary cash, food stamps and medical assistance to families. It also funds programs for homeless persons, refugees, migrant workers, victims of crime and women who are displaced, battered or assaulted. Last year, DHR served 638,000 people in need. In terms of its annual budget, DHR is Maryland's fourth largest state agency.