

BILL NO: House Bill 206  
TITLE: Unaccompanied Minors in Need of Shelter and Supportive Services  
COMMITTEE: Appropriations  
HEARING DATE: January 28, 2020  
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

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House Bill 206 would allow shelters to offer their services to minors. The Women's Law Center (WLC) supports House Bill 206 because it would provide vitally important safety and security to certain minors in a time of need.

The WLC does not profess expertise in the area of homelessness and at-risk youth. However, in the past several years we have been a part of a group of advocates seeking to codify emancipation, which is currently not addressed by statute in Maryland. During conversations with various stakeholders, it became clear that un-emancipated minors who leave their homes for justified reasons, serious abuse or neglect for example, are not able to seek refuge at a shelter precisely because they are minors and shelters are not allowed to take them in. They end up on the streets subject to high risk of being victims of crime, being lured into the sex trafficking arena or otherwise being at great risk of harm. House Bill 206 would allow for minors in these very serious situations to have a place to go. We do not opine on the language or intricacies of the bill, but want to be on record supporting this effort.

Therefore, the Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. urges a favorable report on House Bill 206.

*The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change. The Women's Law Center operates two hotlines, Protection Order Advocacy and Representation Projects in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Carroll County and the Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Project.*