



# **Baltimore Regional Fair Housing Group**

## **House Bill 231: Housing Opportunities Made Equal Act**

### **Before the House Environment and Transportation Committee**

**February 4, 2020**

#### **Position: Favorable**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 233, which prohibits discrimination in the sale or rental of housing based on a person's source of income. The Baltimore Regional Fair Housing Group is a collaboration among the Baltimore metropolitan area's HUD entitlement jurisdictions (Cities of Baltimore and Annapolis, along with Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, and Howard Counties) and the public housing agencies in those jurisdictions, with staff support at the Baltimore Metropolitan Council. We work together regionally to carry out our duty to affirmatively further fair housing and promote housing equity in the Baltimore region.

Currently we are working together to develop a new Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI), which consists of a regional assessment of the status of fair housing and action steps, after last collaborating on a regional AI in 2012. Our fair housing analyses indicate that lack of protection from discrimination based on source of income is a major factor why, in our region, families with vouchers have not been more successful in leasing units in a wider variety of communities, including communities with less concentrated poverty, higher performing schools, and lower levels of crime. Evidence suggests that living in such communities benefits families in a number of ways, including improved educational, employment and health outcomes. Promoting true housing choice also complements our strategy to re-invest in low-income communities to better the quality of life for residents who wish to stay.

Fortunately, just in the last year, three of our jurisdictions – Baltimore City, Anne Arundel County, and Baltimore County – enacted local source of income protections, joining Howard County and the City of Annapolis, which already had their own laws. Enacting a statewide source of income law will help us achieve our AI action item of promoting meaningful housing choice and will provide a level playing field across the state for property owners and voucher holders alike.

**We urge a FAVORABLE report on HB 231.**

For more information contact Erin Karpewicz of Arundel Community Development Services, Chair of the Baltimore Regional Fair Housing Group, at (410) 222-3957 or [ekarpewicz@acdsinc.org](mailto:ekarpewicz@acdsinc.org).