



House Bill 231 – Housing Opportunities Made Equal Act

Position: Support with Amendments

Maryland REALTORS® support HB 231 with amendments addressing single-family property owners, and an amendment offered by the Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA) addressing a cap on housing vouchers for multi-unit buildings and clarification that “source of income” protections will not prohibit discounts to public service occupations.

Regarding single-family properties, the REALTORS® strongly support an amendment to clarify that an owner of three or fewer single-family dwellings is not required to accept a housing voucher IF the owner uses a real estate broker or agent as a property manager. The bill already exempts these single-family owners from using vouchers but only if they manage the property themselves. Because of that, the legislation incentivizes homeowners to forego professional property management. That is both a problem for owners and tenants. Professional management helps owners comply with lead paint laws, rental registration laws, and mandated lease requirements among other important services.

Under the housing voucher program, property owners do more than just accept a check or payment from an alternative income source. The program requires property owners to use specific lease terms and imposes inspections that may be different than the lease terms and inspections for non-voucher tenants. The program requires property owners to sign a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract with HUD. No other “source of income” requires an owner to sign a contract before accepting payment. The approval to participate in the program can take weeks keeping a viable rental property out of circulation until that happens. In addition, there is also variation in how local Public Housing Authorities (PHA) administer and enforce the program.

The administrative burdens of the program are more significant for homeowners who are not full-time landlords. Sometimes these homeowners have job assignments through the military or their work that take them away from home. Sometimes the homeowner must move to a less expensive house but cannot sell their home because there is not enough equity in the property. Under the current bill, if these homeowners use a property manager, they would also have to sign a contract with the local Public Housing Authority to comply with the bill and potentially lose rental income due to delays for inspections and approval.

Although the REALTORS® have not supported adding “source of income” protections that included housing vouchers in the past because Congress never mandated participation in the program, the REALTORS® would support HB 231 if the amendments cited above were included in the bill. With this amendment and the others offered by MMHA, the REALTORS® recommend a favorable report.

**For more information contact bill.castelli@mdrealtor.org or
susan.mitchell@mdrealtor.org**

Amendment to HB 231
(First Reading File Bill)

On page 5, in line 23, strike “and”

On page 6, in line 1, strike “residence.” and insert “RESIDENCE; AND”

On page 6, after line 1, insert:

(3) WITH RESPECT TO DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS SOURCE OF INCOME
IF THE SOURCE OF INCOME IS LOW-INCOME HOUSING ASSISTANCE
CERTIFICATES OR VOUCHERS ISSUED UNDER THE UNITED STATE HOUSING
ACT OF 1937, A REAL ESTATE BROKER, AGENT OR SALESPERSON OR ANY
AGENT THEREOF WHEN REPRESENTING AN INDIVIDUAL WHO OWNS
THREE OR FEWER SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLINGS.