

## **HB 231: The HOME Act – SUPPORT**

Testimony of Maryland Association of Centers for Independent Living

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The Maryland Association of Centers for Independent Living (MACIL) includes seven federally established nonprofit disability resource and advocacy organizations located throughout Maryland operated by and for people with disabilities. Center staff and Boards are at least 51% people with disabilities. We are part of a nationwide network of Centers for Independent Living (CILs) providing the following core services: Information and Referral; Advocacy; Peer Support; Independent Living Skills training and Transition Services.

**MACIL supports the passage of HB 231.** The HOME Act prohibits landlords and other property owners from discriminating against persons seeking housing based on their “source of income.”

As Centers for Independent Living serving every jurisdiction in Maryland, we assist many consumers seeking affordable housing who often rely on Housing Vouchers to secure safe, decent housing. When searching for housing units, our consumers often face discrimination based on the fact they plan to use a voucher for a portion of the rent payment.

In Maryland, tens of thousands of families use housing choice (section 8) vouchers, 60% of whom are receiving SSI, social security or pensions. Therefore, source of income discrimination disproportionately affects vulnerable populations: senior citizens, people with disabilities, single mothers, veterans, and lower wage workers. Passing this legislation will help to prevent this discrimination in the areas of the state not already protected by local legislation.

The HOME Act does not prohibit a landlord from determining the renter’s ability to comply with lease terms or pay the rent by: verifying the renter’s source and amount of income; evaluating the stability and security of the renter’s income; or evaluating the renter’s tenant history and suitability. Likewise it does not prevent a landlord from refusing income derived from criminal activity. MACIL agrees landlords should have the right to make these evaluations.

Passing HB 231 will help to ensure fairness for seniors, working families, veterans, and people with disabilities seeking housing.