



**Testimony for the House Environment and Transportation
Committee
February 4, 2020**

HB 231 – Housing Opportunities Made Equal Act

FAVORABLE

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The ACLU of Maryland supports HB 231, the HOME Act, which prohibits housing discrimination based on an individual's lawful source of income.

The HOME Act extends current housing anti-discrimination laws.

Just as it is unlawful to discriminate against potential tenants based on race or religion, an individual's source of income – whether from wages, a housing voucher, or other benefits – is irrelevant to that individual's suitability as a tenant and their ability to fulfill the terms of a lease. The provisions of this bill have already been upheld by the Maryland Court of Appeals.¹

Many people cannot afford to pay rent from wages alone.

As housing costs rise and wages remain stagnant, many working individuals and families simply cannot afford to pay rent from their wages alone, and must supplement wages with other sources of income. In addition to low wage earners, this bill also increases housing opportunities for seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, single mothers with children, and others who depend on additional sources of income.

Maryland needs more affordable housing.

Maryland's need for affordable housing far outpaces our federal allocation of vouchers to the extent that waiting lists can last years and years. Even people who receive a voucher often find closed doors. They are often excluded from the mainstream rental market, and may not find housing at all. "Homeless with a voucher" is not an uncommon experience.

HB 231 does not burden landlords.

Fair housing laws do not force landlords to rent to any individual or family. This bill would not prevent landlords from screening potential tenants, and ensuring that they will be able to afford to pay rent and abide by the terms of a lease. Many Maryland companies manage properties in both jurisdictions with and without source of income anti-discrimination laws, allowing them to accept vouchers at their property with little to no additional effort.

¹ *Montgomery County v. Glenmont Hills Associates Privacy World at Glenmont Metro Ctr.*, 402 Md. 250 (2007).



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HB 231 would align Maryland with the growing number of states and localities that already have source of income anti-discrimination laws.

Across the country, more than 16 states, and over 91 cities and counties have source of income laws. In Maryland, six counties – Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George’s – have source of income anti-discrimination laws, as well as the cities of Baltimore, Frederick, and Annapolis. The enactment of HB 231 would ensure that all Marylanders – who are retired or disabled, or simply do not earn enough from full-time jobs to pay rent from wages alone – receive this same protection, and have the same opportunity to live and raise their families in safe and healthy communities.

For the foregoing reasons, we urge a favorable report on the HOME Act, HB 231.