



# THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**BILL:** House Bill 231 – Housing Opportunities Made Equal Act

**SPONSOR:** Delegate Lierman, *et al.*

**HEARING DATE:** February 4, 2020

**COMMITTEE:** Environment and Transportation

**CONTACT:** Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

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**POSITION:** SUPPORT

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The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 231**, which prohibits housing discrimination based on a person's source of income. More specifically, the bill adds source of income (SOI) discrimination to the State's fair housing policy.

This legislation addresses an important societal issue that has yet to be addressed by this State and the Federal Government. Under the Fair Housing Act, it is illegal to make housing decisions on the basis of a person's protected class, including race, color, sex, national origin, religion, handicap, or familial status. Unfortunately, housing discrimination on the basis of a person's source of income is still legal under Maryland and Federal law. In recent years landlords and realtors have capitalized on this legality, as housing discrimination on the basis of SOI has increased. This lack of protection for those who have various sources of income, including Social Security benefits and housing vouchers, at the will of landlords and others involved in real estate transactions.

Landlord discrimination against voucher holders can deepen burdens for vulnerable households, whether they be economic or otherwise. For instance, this type of discrimination makes it difficult for people with the aforementioned SOIs to secure healthy, well-maintained, fairly priced housing. Thus, policies like that outlined in this legislation is needed to combat these effects. Studies show SOI non-

discrimination laws improve these vulnerable populations' ability to use their vouchers in higher opportunity areas.<sup>1</sup>

Prince George's County recognizes the need to protect these individuals from SOI discrimination and has taken action to ensure this group is protected. This past November, the County Executive signed into law Council Bill 38-2019, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of a person's SOI. Now, it is time for the State to also take this step in the right direction toward ensuring equality for all Marylanders in the housing market. Therefore, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive enthusiastically **SUPPORTS House Bill 321** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

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<sup>1</sup> Alison Bell, Barbara Sard, and Becky Koepnick, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Prohibiting Discrimination Against Renters Using Housing Vouchers Improves Results Lessons From Cities and States That Have Enacted Source of Income Laws* (Dec. 20, 2018), <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/10-10-18hous.pdf>.