

Brian Kramer Testimony in Support of HB 1149
Social Housing Act of 2020
Submitted to the Environment and Transportation Committee
February 28, 2020

My name is Brian Kramer, I'm a Montgomery County resident, a recent graduate of MCPS, and a freshman at American University studying to become a teacher.

There are a few new committee members here today, hello Delegate Lierman, but most of you may remember the three of us were before this committee last year speaking about social housing. I shared my story about my mom and I experiencing homelessness while I was a 7th grader in Charles County, Maryland.

I want to reiterate my story and push for the full passage of HB 1149, a bill that I was honored to work on with Delegate Stewart and Peter Gowan, and one that will tackle the homelessness and housing crises head-on. Housing couldn't be more of a personal issue for me, because I've seen first-hand how a lack of action by state and local authorities can displace families and keep families in deep poverty. I can tell you that if the social housing options we're advocating for in this bill were available to my family 7 years ago, my life would be dramatically different.

In the richest state in the richest country, nobody should be homeless. But the reality is, many thousands of Marylanders, including students, experience homelessness every single year. Even more Marylanders experience severe cost burdens in affording housing, with many paying 50% or more of their income.

The Kirwan Commission is the talk of the town in Annapolis this year. As a future teacher in Maryland, I love and welcome the recommendations of the Commission and can't wait to see them implemented. Housing affordability and student homelessness ties directly into academic performance and the mental well-being of students in public schools, and tackling these issues helps the most vulnerable students in this state. Housing policy *is* education policy.

While I was experiencing homelessness, I had to keep going to school and I had to pretend that my life was normal. But in reality, I was experiencing something that no human being should ever have to experience. I didn't have a desk to do my homework on after school, I had the dashboard of my mom's car. I slept in shelters and I felt incredibly dehumanized.

Housing is a human right, and no family in our amazing state should ever have to be homeless. My name is Brian Kramer, and I'm asking all of you to advance this historic legislation, for every family in the state and for those still suffering from homelessness and struggling to afford housing. Thank you so much for your consideration.