



# MARIAN HOUSE

Women Moving from Dependence to Independence

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB155

### **Higher Education – Tuition Exemption for Foster Care Recipients and Homeless Youth Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee – January 27, 2021**

TO: Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee  
FROM: Katie Allston, Executive Director  
DATE: January 22, 2021

For over 38 years, Marian House has existed as a holistic, healing community for women and their children who are in need of housing and support services. We provide a safe, sober, and loving environment that challenges our residents to love and respect themselves, confront emotional and socioeconomic barriers, and transition to stable and independent lives.

Marian House supports SB 155 because it improves Maryland's tuition exemption for youth experiencing homelessness in order to provide access to higher education and a pathway out of poverty for talented Maryland students. As an organization deeply engaged in working with people experiencing homelessness, we see first-hand the numerous challenges that our clients encounter as a result of deep poverty, abandonment, and abuse and neglect, including weak academic foundations, limited family support, and lack of awareness of available financial resources. Yet, we also see our clients' dream for more and set their goals for careers that require higher education.

Passing SB 155 is a critical step in addressing the barriers that youth experiencing homelessness face, giving them increased access to college. It is no secret that post-secondary attainment is increasingly necessary to move out of poverty and homelessness, and live a healthy, and productive life.

SB 155 is consistent with other state laws that provide tuition exemptions for homeless youth, and will effectively address problems with Maryland's current law.

Marian House strongly urges the committee to issue a Favorable Report on SB155. Thank you for your consideration.

Thank you for your support,

Katie Allston, LCSW-C  
Executive Director