



Chelsea Andrews
Executive Director

**Testimony of Chelsea Andrews,
Executive Director of the Housing Opportunities Commission
Favorable with Amendments on SB848 - Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

The Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County (HOC) strongly supports legislation to establish a Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program in Maryland. We thank Senators Guzzone, Smith, and Watson for developing this legislation and are eager to put these proposed new resources to work in Montgomery County.

HOC is Montgomery County's Public Housing Authority. We administer about 8,000 federal Housing Choice Vouchers, and serve more than 9,000 additional families through our properties and other programs. Our combined waiting list currently has almost 40,000 applicants and the average wait time to receive a federal Housing Choice Voucher in Montgomery County is 6.5 years. Additional state resources are crucial to be able to provide relief for these families until they are able to access federal assistance or reach self-sufficiency.

We do recommend a technical amendment to the bill to ensure that the program is feasible and sustainable for Housing Authorities. The proposed 1% administrative fee is much lower than the administrative fee provided through the HUD formula for Housing Choice Vouchers, and would simply not provide sufficient resources to administer these additional vouchers. A simple solution would be for the legislation to specify that administrative costs should be covered according to HUD's formula for Housing Choice Vouchers.

Notwithstanding our recommendation for this technical amendment, we hope you will support this legislation so that we can ensure that every family in our state has access to high-quality, affordable housing..