



## **TESTIMONY FOR SB0848**

### **Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program – Establishment**

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Guzzone

**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0848 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

The average wait time to receive a Federal Housing Choice voucher is currently averaging 6 months to 6 years. For low-income residents who need assistance with housing, this is an untenable situation.

This bill would create a stop-gap a statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program, which would provide vouchers and housing assistance payments for low-income families that are currently on a waiting list under the Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program. The vouchers would be good for up to 5 years or whenever the resident receives a Federal Housing Choice voucher, whichever comes first.

Vouchers and housing assistance payments would be prioritized for families that include: (1) a child who is under the age of 16 years; (2) a military veteran; (3) an individual experiencing homelessness; (4) a disabled individual; or (5) an elderly individual. Disability assistance and, in some cases, a live-in aide will also be provided under this program.

We believe that it is important to keep our residents housed, particularly those residents who are most at risk.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.