



**TESTIMONY FOR HB0428
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS – RENTAL ASSISTANCE FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOL
FAMILIES – PROGRAM AND FUND - ESTABLISHMENT**

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Stewart

Committee: Budget and Tax

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0428 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.

Supporting Marylanders who are struggling and on the verge of becoming homeless is a worthy goal for the state. Those who are marginalized and vulnerable should get our support. This bill, if enacted, would establish a fund for providing rental assistance to families in community schools.

Community schools already receive Concentration of Poverty Grants to support the education of children from poor families. However, if the family is unable to pay rent and becomes homeless, those children are even more at risk. This fund would identify families who are on the edge of becoming homeless by establishing a coordinator in each community school who would make a determination based on overdue rent notices, unemployment receipts, reports of unsafe living conditions, etc. The program would then provide rental and utility assistance, payment of back rent or utilities and any penalties or fines to the family of the student enrolled in the community school for a period of 12 months.

Our members understand that many people in our state struggle to meet basic needs and support the state's efforts to ensure that Marylanders are housed and that their children can be in an environment that supports their education.

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