



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

To the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Chair: Senator Brian Feldman

January 24, 2024

Senate Bill 0203: Housing Innovation Pilot Program and Housing Innovation Fund - Establishment (Housing Innovation Pilot Program Act of 2024)

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in **SUPPORT** of **Senate Bill 0203: Housing Innovation Pilot Program and Housing Innovation Fund - Establishment (Housing Innovation Pilot Program Act of 2024)**

Housing has been a major issue for many people living in rural areas of Maryland. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, “Across Maryland, there is a shortage of rental homes affordable and available to extremely low-income households (ELI), whose incomes are at or below the poverty guideline or 30% of their area median income (AMI). Many of these households are severely cost-burdened, spending more than half of their income on housing. Severely cost-burdened poor households are more likely than other renters to sacrifice other necessities like healthy food and healthcare to pay the rent and to experience unstable housing situations like evictions.”

We don’t want rural Marylanders to have to choose between housing and healthcare. When housing becomes a priority, we see that a person’s health declines. Therefore, there’s a direct correlation between the two. We urge a favorable report on this pilot program.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Dayton, MS, NREMT, CNE, Executive Director

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