

Untitled document (9).pdf

Uploaded by: Cristi Richardson

Position: FAV

The cost of living is significantly impacting the ability of all people to afford housing. Maryland's average rent is \$1,729 for a one-bedroom apartment. To only spend 30% of your monthly income on rent in Maryland, you'd need to make \$5,763 per month. As evictions and homelessness increase shelters are implementing further barriers to success. Without licensing and regulations, shelters can follow their ideologies regarding who deserves access to shelter. They can discriminate against protected classes and claim their religion as an excuse.

I work with the unhoused population in Salisbury, Maryland.

I would like to tell you about whom I serve and why they have been denied shelter.

- A family with three street homeless children was denied shelter because the mother and father were unmarried. The shelter stated that this went against their religious beliefs. This family chose to go to the courthouse and get married so they would not be homeless.
- A trans woman was denied shelter for being “unsafe for children” because of her gender identity despite having no record of violence. She was given shelter at a separate organization where she was housed with men and her paperwork was circled with both man and woman on it. She left and chose to be street homeless due to harassment.
- Two unhoused individuals died last month due to the shelter not allowing anyone who has a substance abuse disorder to stay.
- A French Creole man was told that he could not stay in a shelter because his language barrier was a safety concern.
- A man was denied shelter at both of our local shelters because his wheelchair was labeled a “liability”

What do we do as organizations that provide support for the vulnerable when the institutions provided turn away anyone they don't agree with or who they see as inconvenient?

SB1107_DHCD_SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Danielle Meister

Position: FAV

DATE: March 11, 2024

BILL NO.: Senate Bill 1107

TITLE: Homeless Shelter Licensing Program

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Letter of Support

Description of Bill:

Senate Bill 1107, with the sponsor's amendments, requires the Department of Housing and Community Development to:

1. Review current habitability and admissions standards of homeless shelters in the State;
2. Recommend a basic habitability and admission standard for homeless shelters in the State; and
3. Recommend a plan to establish a program within the Department of Housing and Community Development to license homeless shelters in the State

Background and Analysis:

Over 32,000 Marylanders experienced homelessness in FY2023. Approximately 16% of individuals were unsheltered, 67% were in emergency shelters, and 17% were in transitional shelters. Emergency and transitional shelters serve Maryland's most vulnerable citizens, who are at the highest risk of contracting illnesses, have chronic health conditions and disabilities, and who rely on shelters to meet their most basic needs for nutrition, personal hygiene, and sleeping accommodations. Shelters also serve highly vulnerable populations with complex needs, such as people fleeing domestic violence (8%), children under 18 (20%), older adults (26%), and chronically homeless individuals with a disability (18%). Due to this high level of vulnerability and nature of the care being provided, it is critical that shelters operate with a minimum set of standards for habitability, quality of care, and staff and volunteers that are appropriately trained and equipped to meet the needs of households.

Of the over 190 emergency and transitional shelters in operation across Maryland, only 68 are funded by the State and have mandated standards and regular monitoring for compliance. The remaining shelters are funded by local government or private organizations, and subject to minimal local laws or regulations - or in some cases, none at all (including basic zoning, fire, health, and occupancy requirements). DHCD receives outreach from individuals every day regarding situations where they have been denied entry into shelter based on their membership in a protected class, terminated from program services unfairly or in violation of federal laws, or experienced trauma and mistreatment while staying in shelter.

If the bill is enacted, DHCD intends to engage community partners to design the regulations and licensing application process - including Continuums of Care, shelter service providers, local governments, and other state agencies.

DHCD Position:

Senate Bill 1107, as amended, is a critical step forward to ensuring shelters, regardless of funding source or geographic location, provide a consistent and quality level of care across the State, and that people experiencing homelessness have rights and remedies when shelters violate those standards. The Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 1107.

Written Testimony MDOA HB577 - DHCD Homeless Shelt

Uploaded by: Isabella Shycoff

Position: FAV



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Carmel Roques | Secretary

Date: March 11, 2024

Bill Number: **SB1107**

Bill Title: Department of Housing and Community Development - Homeless Shelter Licensing Program - Establishment

Committee: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment

MDOA Position: FAVORABLE

The Department of Aging (MDOA) thanks the Chair and Committee members for the opportunity to submit this letter of support for Senate Bill (SB) 1107 - Department of Housing and Community Development - Homeless Shelter Licensing Program - Establishment.

This bill would establish a homeless shelter licensing program in the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, requiring that all shelters be relicensed every two years and lays out key building and operating standards for the benefit of shelter residents. This wisely aims to bring state oversight and consistent quality of care to all homeless shelter operations in Maryland.

The Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) supports this increased state oversight because the older adult population in Maryland is growing exponentially and with that growth is increased older adult homelessness. According to DHCD's FY2023 data, collected by local continuums of care, Maryland's homeless shelters regularly serve older adults. Of the over 32,000 Marylanders that experienced homelessness in FY2023, about a quarter of those people were older adults. In many counties, older adults experiencing homelessness are the fastest growing age cohort.¹ Thus, when DHCD and our area agencies on aging hear from people about situations where they have been denied entry into shelters based on their membership in a protected class, denied

¹ See, e.g., Howard County PATH Home, 2020-2025 Plan to End Homelessness, p. 22, available at: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.howardcountymd.gov/community-partnerships/resource/path-home>



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Carmel Roques | Secretary

services unfairly or in violation of federal law, or experience trauma or mistreatment while staying in shelters - they are undoubtedly hearing from older adults experiencing this mistreatment too. Older adults regularly have physical limitations and special medical care issues and will benefit from a uniform standard of service that is regulated, monitored and enforced.

Pursuant to a recent Executive Order, in January 2024, MDOA launched the Longevity-Ready Maryland Initiative,² which will build upon existing efforts across state agencies, private and philanthropic sectors and other stakeholders to tackle real-life challenges throughout the lifespan, taking a whole-of-life and whole-of-government approach. Key goals of Longevity-Ready Maryland are for all Marylanders to lead lives that are healthy, financially secure, socially connected, purposeful - with improved access to affordable housing, healthcare, and retirement needs. For Maryland to be longevity-ready, we need a high-functioning homeless shelter network overseen by a statewide agency, and through a uniform approach, such as is proposed by SB 1107.

For these reasons, the Department of Aging respectfully urges a favorable report for SB 1107. If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Nunez, Legislative Director, at andrea.nunez@maryland.gov or (443) 414-8183.

Sincerely,

Carmel Roques
Secretary
Maryland Department of Aging

² See Maryland Department of Aging: Longevity-Ready Maryland Initiative *available at*: <https://aging.maryland.gov/Pages/LRM.aspx>



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Carmel Roques | Secretary

Favorable Testimony SB1107 3.12.2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Jeremy Browning

Position: FAV



**Maryland Commission
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

**TESTIMONY OF JEREMY BROWNING
DIRECTOR, MARYLAND COMMISSION ON LGBTQIA+ AFFAIRS
FAVORABLE STATEMENT ON SB1107
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - HOMELESS
SHELTER LICENSING PROGRAM - ESTABLISHMENT**

March 12, 2024

Environment, Energy, and the Environment Committee

The Hon. Brian J. Feldman, Chair
The Hon. Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Environment, Energy, and the Environment Committee, my name is Jeremy Browning(he/him), and I am the Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs. The Commission was created by the 2021 Maryland General Assembly, and later altered in 2023, to assess challenges facing our LGBTQIA+ communities, establish best practices and recommendations for LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and provide testimony to legislative and administrative bodies.

On behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs we strongly support Senate Bill 1107 to create a Homeless Shelter Licensing Program in the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). We applaud the efforts to ensure the safety, dignity and rights of all individuals, including LGBTQIA+ people, experiencing homelessness in our state.

By establishing a licensing program for homeless shelters, Senate Bill 1107 will set clear operational and building standards, guaranteeing that shelter residents are provided necessary care, support, and protection. Additionally the bill includes a vital provision that prevents discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry or national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or genetic information. This anti-discrimination provision is a critical component to ensure that marginalized community members, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, are treated with dignity and respect while accessing temporary shelter.

Senate Bill 1107 is especially important for the Commission because it has been well documented that LGBTQIA+ communities, particularly transgender, nonbinary, and gender-diverse individuals, face disproportionate rates of homelessness.

The National Center for Transgender Equality recently released their 2022 US Trans Survey Early Insights Report which finds more than one-third (34%) of respondents were experiencing poverty and nearly one-third of respondents had experienced homelessness in their lifetime.

The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, published their LGBT People and Housing Affordability, Discrimination, and Homelessness report that reveals when compared to non-LGBT people, LGBT people have higher rates of poverty, lower rates of homeownership, and higher rates of homelessness. The report also highlights that federal, state, and local laws provide only a patchwork of protections against-LGBT discrimination in housing, lending, and social services.

True Colors United, a nonprofit that focuses on the unique experiences of LGBTQIA+ young people, produced a report, At The Intersections, that finds that LGBTQ+ youth and young adults are 120% more likely to experience homelessness than their non-LGBTQ+ peers. Furthermore, service providers estimate that 20-40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs strongly urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 1107. The Commission is grateful to Senator Mary Washington, additional bill sponsors, and DHCD for addressing the needs of vulnerable populations and ensuring that homeless shelters uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

REFERENCES:

James, S.E., Herman, J.L., Durso, L.E., & Heng-Lehtinen, R. (2024). Early Insights: A Report of the 2022 U.S. Transgender Survey. National Center for Transgender Equality, Washington, DC

Romero, A.P., Goldberg, S.K., & Vasquez, L.A. (2020). LGBT People and Housing Affordability, Discrimination, and Homelessness. The Williams Institute.

Price, C., Chanchan, D., Wheeler, C., Seip, N., & Rush, J. (Eds.). (2019). At the Intersections: A collaborative report on LGBTQ youth homelessness. (2nd Edition) True Colors United and the National LGBTQ Task Force.

Support SB 1107 - Trans Maryland.pdf

Uploaded by: Lee Blinder

Position: FAV



Trans Maryland
1800 E Northern Parkway #66332
Baltimore MD 21239

Senate Bill #1107 Department of Housing and Community Development - Homeless Shelter Licensing Program - Establishment

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 12, 2024

Position: Support

Greetings Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagen, and the esteemed members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. Trans Maryland is a multi-racial, multi-gender community power building organization for Maryland's trans community. Trans Maryland runs the state's largest name and gender marker change program, offering peer-to-peer guidance and financial assistance to Marylanders seeking a name and gender marker change. We also run the state's largest peer to peer connection space for Trans Marylanders. We represent thousands of transgender Marylanders who have detailed the barriers they face in accessing affirming housing, as well as those in need of emergency shelter. The overwhelming majority have no affirming options to turn to in 23 counties in Maryland, and the programs in Baltimore City are at max capacity. We urge the legislature to enact Senate Bill #1107 to protect transgender and gender expansive people who are especially vulnerable in our shelter system.

Affirming emergency shelter is a crucial life-saving initiative for the transgender Marylanders that Trans Maryland serves. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development published a report titled "Equal Access for Transgender People: Supporting Inclusive Housing and Shelters". This report details disturbing gaps in access for transgender people as compared to our cisgender counterparts, and notes increased risk of violence and death for this population. ["One in ten transgender individuals reports being evicted based on their gender expression. \[...\] Nearly 30% of homeless transgender individuals report being turned away from a shelter due to their transgender status and 22% report experiencing sexual assault perpetrated by staff or other shelter residents."](#)

In the past year, we at Trans Maryland have seen a sharp rise in new Marylanders seeking our services, Marylanders who were fleeing the now [twenty-two states](#) that have banned at least some manner of gender affirming care. Most striking, we have seen many new transgender Marylanders from Florida, which last year banned gender affirming care, not just for youth, but also [80% of transgender adults](#) there. Our already strained systems, that often fail the trans community, will continue to be inundated with new residents that they are not equipped to serve or provide basic safety to under their roof.

As more Americans flee to become Marylanders as these attacks on transgender rights worsen in the coming years, we have an obligation to provide basic human dignity to both existing and new transgender Marylanders. Maryland needs to enact Senate Bill #1107, a common sense bill to ensure transgender Marylanders have the same level of access to emergency shelter and

For more information, contact Lee Blinder, Executive Director of Trans Maryland at lee@transmaryland.org



Trans Maryland
1800 E Northern Parkway #66332
Baltimore MD 21239

respectful treatment as our transgender counterparts in the shelter system, and thus fulfill Governor Moore's direction to "leave no one behind". It is time for the law to be crystal clear for transgender Marylanders and ensure Maryland's shelters offer a safe space for us.

For these reasons, **we urge a favorable report on this Bill # SB 1107.**

For more information, contact Lee Blinder, Executive Director of Trans Maryland at lee@transmaryland.org

SB 1107_MNADV_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Melanie Shapiro

Position: FWA



BILL NO: Senate Bill 1107
TITLE: Department of Housing and Community Development – Homeless Shelter Licensing Program – Establishment
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
HEARING DATE: March 12, 2024
POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report with amendment on SB 1107.**

Senate Bill 1107 establishes a Homeless Shelter Licensing Program within the Department of Housing and Community Development. This bill as drafted would include domestic violence shelters. The MNADV is comprised of member programs which provide services in all 24 of Maryland’s jurisdictions, and many of these longstanding programs operate domestic violence shelters. These shelters already adhere to county requirements per fire marshal and other inspectors and receive technical assistance and training from MNADV. They are well established programs that exist pursuant to [MD Code, Family Law, § 4-515](#) and [Md. Code Regs. 01.04.01.05](#). This program duplicates current processes already in place for domestic violence shelters.

Additionally, staff at Maryland’s domestic violence shelters are already tasked with an extremely difficult job. Not only are they serving people who are homeless, they are working with domestic and intimate partner violence survivors who are experiencing various levels of trauma. The numbers and needs of these survivors have only increased in the past four years since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Yet, the shelters have remained open, avoided outbreaks, and continued to provide a high quality of service to victims of domestic and intimate partner violence while maintaining their confidential location. Adding additional licensing regulations to an already heavily taxed workforce would only serve to create a greater amount of paperwork and time spent away from the actual job of working with these victims and, often, their children.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, domestic violence shelters – unlike other traditional homeless shelters – are confidential locations. Maintaining the safety of these victims is the highest priority for shelter staff. Additional inspections pose risks to the safety, security, and confidentiality of the shelters and their residents. The Violence Against Women Act provides for strict confidentiality for victims of domestic violence. The MNADV and its member programs take this requirement very seriously.

For further information contact Melanie Shapiro • Public Policy Director • 301-852-3930 • mshapiro@mnadv.org

1997 Annapolis Exchange Parkway, Suite 300 • Annapolis, MD 21401
Tel: 301-429-3601 • E-mail: info@mnadv.org • Website: www.mnadv.org



MNADV would respectfully request an amendment to the bill that would **exclude domestic violence shelters operated by a comprehensive program** pursuant to [MD Code, Family Law, § 4-515](#) and [Md. Code Regs. 01.04.01.05](#). Absent such an amendment there are safety concerns for victims and for the comprehensive programs because of the unduly burdensome and duplicative requirements the licensing process would entail.

For the above stated reasons, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a **favorable report with amendments.**

HB0492-ET-FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FWA



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

HB0492

March 12, 2024

TO: Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 492 – Speed Monitoring Systems on Interstate 83 - Unpaid and Overdue Citations
POSITION: Support with Amendment

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 492 with the amendment proposed by the sponsor allowing for the immobilization of vehicles in violation.

HB 492 would require Baltimore City to report to the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) vehicles that have amassed over \$250 in unpaid, overdue moving violations recorded by Interstate 83 (I-83) speed cameras. An amendment introduced by Delegate Rosenberg would allow the City to immobilize vehicles that exceed this threshold. The legislation would require these offenders to be documented and reported to the MVA, improving accountability and collaboration. Further, the amendment would mirror the City's authority to immobilize vehicles with three or more overdue parking violations.

The I-83 speed camera program has allowed the City to reduce speeding and crashes along the highway since implementation in mid-2022. However, some motorists have been slow to change their behavior and continue to travel at dangerous speeds.

As amended, HB 492 would allow for the immobilization of these offenders and create several benefits. For instance, out of state drivers may feel little urgency to address or avoid accruing I-83 speed camera citations as we do not benefit from reciprocity with several surrounding states. In those instances, immobilization could present a strong deterrent to drivers outside the jurisdiction of the Maryland MVA. Frequent and repeated violation of speed camera law is indicative of a general disregard for following the laws on our roads and could lead to serious injury or death due to a potential crash if not properly addressed. Allowing immobilization of vehicles accruing a significant number of speed violations on I-83 will improve road safety for all motorists.

In addition to acting as a deterrent, immobilization authority and improved collaboration between the City and the MVA could lead to an increase to I-83 citation collection rates. This would generate additional funding which is by law reserved for improvements along the highway, therefore bolstering the City's efforts to improve safety and driving conditions.

The BCA believes that the provisions of HB 492 and its amendments would deter unsafe driving in Baltimore City and contribute to further reductions in crashes along Interstate 83.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable with amendment** report on HB 492.

Senate Bill 1107 Testimony Letter.pdf

Uploaded by: Aimee Izer

Position: UNF



Help for Today... Hope for Tomorrow

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Aimee Izer, the Administrator of The Hope Center at the Hagerstown Rescue Mission. I am writing in opposition to SB 1107. The Hope Center has been providing shelter and resources to the homeless community since 1955. The Hope Center is a multi-faceted faith-based organization providing emergency shelter services to men 365 days a year. We also offer a residential life recovery program based on Biblical truth in Christian fundamentals. We provide three meals daily to anyone who wants to utilize this resource, regardless of age, sex, gender, or religion. During extreme weather conditions we provide a warming/cooling center.

The Hope Center has never once closed our doors to the community in the last 69 years. We have never taken taxpayer funding for the operation of this ministry. As of December 2023, The Hope Center provided 17,899 bed nights, served 53,685 meals, provided 660 different families with food assistance, and gave \$27,103 in clothing to 2398 people through our voucher system. Senate Bill 1107 goes directly against our religious standards, religious conduct, and religious freedoms. Senate Bill 1107 gives the state carte blanche say over our operational standards including at minimum standards for: "incorporation and governance, number and duties of paid staff, procedures for vetting volunteers", and so on. The Hope Center cannot and will not allow the state to have governance over our religious freedoms and ministry and continue to operate as such.

If Senate Bill 1107 would progress it directly goes against our religious freedoms and autonomy protected under the 1st Amendment. Passage of Senate Bill 1107 will result in loss of services provided by The Hope Center. Creating a detrimental impact on the Homeless population and surrounding community. The delegation of authority to a regulating agency without sufficient constitutional protections in place is in and of itself unconstitutional. The regulation goes beyond solving the compelling government interest and does not only regulate what is necessary to resolve the government interest. The bill goes beyond and infringes on the first amendment rights of the faith based homeless shelters. I would ask for an amendment to this bill taking out section 6-1204 the entire Letter A section or making for a religious exemption to this part of the bill. We are good with letter B as we all are concerned with the health and safety of our buildings for all who come here for assistance.

Aimee Izer

Administrator

The Hope Center at the Hagerstown Rescue Mission



*A higher standard.
A higher purpose.*



SB1107-EEE_MACo_OPP.pdf

Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko

Position: UNF



Senate Bill 1107

Department of Housing and Community Development - Homeless Shelter Licensing Program - Establishment

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: March 12, 2024

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 1107. This bill grants the Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) the ability to regulate homeless shelters.

For the 2024 Maryland General Assembly Session, MACo has made it a priority – one of the Association’s four legislative initiatives – to *Advance Comprehensive Housing Solutions*. Much like climate change and sea level rise, the challenges surrounding affordable housing are vast and call for a large, multipronged approach. While in other policy areas, it may be easy to deduce a simple cause-and-effect relationship, housing is a complex web of multifaceted factors. Addressing challenges like workforce, financing, interest rates, broad economic trends, supply chain, economic trends, and large out-of-state corporate interests – among many other obstacles – requires an all-hands-on-deck effort from policy makers at all levels.

MACo is working with sponsors to cross-file legislation to target several components of this crisis: abandonment/blight disincentives for vacant properties, corporate owner transparency, and short-term rental oversight. Additionally, under this initiative, counties will be supporting other pro-housing legislation which helps to advance the conversation, balances local flexibility, and ensures more Marylanders can afford a place to call home.

Counties recognize and broadly support the intent of SB 1107 to establish a minimum standard for homeless shelter operations. When members of the community may be at their lowest, they should still have options that grant them dignity and decency. However, counties do raise significant objections to how this bill was brought to fruition, as well as several serious technical flaws in its potential implementation:

- **No Input From Stakeholders** – When MACo requested information from DHCD as to which stakeholders were involved in the drafting of the legislation, representatives indicated that they declined to include anyone outside of the Department. As providers of both homeless and social services, counties and nonprofit partners should have been brought into the conversation. Additionally, the legislation does not mention collaboration with local Continuums of Care (CoC), which, under federal HUD mandate, hold local projects accountable. A lack of

coordination with CoCs in the intent behind this bill or the means to implement could result in numerous unintended consequences that will dilute the way in which poor actors (shelters that discriminate or treat people unfairly when they are most in need) are held accountable.

- **Staff Accountability** - Section 6-1204 (3) dictates that DHCD can hold shelters accountable to staffing plans and paid staff. This bill fails to clarify how DHCD has the authority to do this when many shelters across Maryland do not receive state funding to operate.
- **Burdensome Licensure Requirements** - Section 6-1202 (B) - requires shelter operators and building owners to apply for a license every 2 years. The shelters about which DHCD has expressed concern regarding discriminatory practices are managed by small nonprofits or churches that operate on small budgets, reliant on limited volunteer staff. Additionally, the bill is silent about shelters operated by counties or on county property. Counties are normally exempted from such licensure requirements.
- **Emergency Shelter Licensure Requirement** – It is critical in emergencies that counties and nonprofit partners move quickly. While the carve-out for 6-1201(C)(2) does give some latitude to emergency shelters, it is not explicit enough and may cause delay to the deployment of Freezing Weather Shelters (FWS), code blue shelters, and cooling centers. This lack of clarity may drastically undercut a county’s ability to provide emergency services and is a significant departure from best practices. Counties often struggle to find space and funding to expand shelters for the cold months and often must rely on churches or spaces within county-owned buildings to provide this life-saving measure. It is unclear how the State will allow for the flexibility that localities rely on to negotiate these extra emergency beds. If a shelter, opened for the winter months, is held to the same standard as a year-round shelter that receives more resources, that extra license requirement may result in fewer beds being available during the freezing months and people dying outside on the streets.
- **Silent on Hotel Vouchers** – Many rural counties, which cannot afford to establish shelter infrastructure, rely on hotel vouchers and other subsidies as a measure to combat homelessness. This legislation is silent on how DHCD may be able to license those programs and how this may impact partners in the hospitality industry.
- **Broad Authority, Little Understanding of Real Impact** - Effectively, this bill grants authority to DHCD to close shelters without regard for broader impact and bed capacity. This is a point that MACo has raised with both the sponsor and DHCD but that has not been sufficiently addressed. As the primary back-stop for social services, if the State mandates a shelter closure without any considerations or stakeholder feedback, counties will be left to fill in the holes of an already overburdened social safety net. As DHCD has declined to holistically include anyone in conversations around implementation, at minimum, there exist many questions about staff capacity, back-stops, co-mingling of federal, state, and local authority, and vague language around infection control and prevention policies and procedures. The broad brushstrokes of this bill leave too many items open to interpretation, which does not build cohesion or trust between the State and county governments. It is recommended that the State bring the local

CoCs and county governments (a few of which are the CoC leads) into a focused, intentional and transparent planning process to outline and align the shared intention and methods to reach a revised course of action that will result in more accountability for bad actors refusing to admit people into their shelters. MACo supports the intention of equitable access to homeless shelters for those who are living unsheltered in Maryland. However, without local buy-in by the State to develop a shared plan, the result will just create more red tape without the incentive of any new resources (the bill provides no new funding for sheltering). It will take time for the state to reach the goals of expanding access to affordable housing at all levels of income, therefore we must do everything we can to ensure people have access to emergency shelter and that the beds we have now can accept the growing numbers of people experiencing homelessness.

Counties remain committed to working with the Committee, stakeholders, the sponsor, and DHCD in driving toward better solutions, but must voice significant concerns and opposition with the development and possible implementation of this bill. For this reason, MACo urges the Committee to give SB 1107 an **UNFAVORABLE** report.

Senate Bill 1107.pdf

Uploaded by: Laurel Walker

Position: UNF

March 11, 2024

TO: MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FROM: LAUREL E. WALKER

17426 SWANN ROAD

HAGERSTOWN, MD 21740

RE: WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB1107

Good afternoon everyone:

Nearly 70 years ago (1955) my parents, Jim and Ellen Resh, answered God's call to establish the Hagerstown Rescue Mission (currently known as The Hope Center). With 5 young children in tow they left a lovely home and a comfortable lifestyle to move into central Hagerstown where they provided food, clothing, shelter, and most importantly life-changing spiritual help through sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to men, women, boys and girls. I have been involved in some capacity since it was founded in May of 1955. In the past I was office manager and director of public relations. Currently I am a weekly volunteer as well as Treasurer of the Board of Directors.

The doors of this ministry have been open continuously 24 hours a day, 365 days a year since its inception in 1955. Although they do provide shelter to homeless men, this ministry was not established as a "homeless shelter"; they operate as a multi-faceted ministry aiding the less fortunate and needy in our community along with offering an in-depth rehabilitation program for individuals struggling with addictions.

This organization has been in operation doing much good for the community without receiving any tax-payer funding, and The Hope Center has always been in full compliance with all federal, state, county and city laws and regulations, and they meet (or exceed) all regulations.

The proposed legislation in HB577 will require licensure for homeless shelters along with strong state mandated regulations that goes beyond and infringes on the first amendment rights of Christian homeless shelters. This requirement for licensure is major government overreach that could force changes to their faith-based policies which could potentially cause them to shut down. Closing the doors of this faith-based organization would seriously increase the homeless situation in our city and surrounding area.

Some statistics from the year 2023:

8,338 Items of Clothing given

898 food bags given (20+ pounds per bag)

53,685 meals served

17,899 overnight beds provided

This nearly 70 year non profit organization, operating in full compliance with all laws and regulations, has been a lighthouse of HOPE in our city and surrounding area. They should not be subject to licensure by the State of Maryland.

I strongly and emphatically OPPOSE SB1107 and request that if HB577 is passed, there would be an exemption for The Hope Center which provides a vital service to the homeless, unemployed, under-employed, less fortunate and needy individuals who desperately need and rely on these services. This organization has stood the test of time in providing a hand up to the needy while meeting all requirements and existing laws and being fully funded by caring friends of The Hope Center who also want to help.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my opposition to this proposed legislation for which there clearly was not due diligence by the drafter(s) of the bill. Closures of existing shelters and organizations providing help to Maryland's needy and less fortunate would have serious ramifications within the communities we serve.

Very sincerely,

Laurel Walker

17426 Swann Road

Hagerstown, MD 21740

301-667-8673

HALO 3.11.24 LTR Senator Feldman.pdf

Uploaded by: Richard Duvall

Position: UNF



Hope And Life Outreach
119 South Boulevard – Salisbury, MD 2180

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Salisbury, MD 21802
410-742-9356
410-742-4211 - Fax

March 11, 2024

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Maryland Senate
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Senate Bill 1107- Homeless Shelter Licensing Program – Establishment
Cross-filed with HB577

Dear Senator Feldman and Members of the Committee,

I write on behalf of HALO in opposition to the referenced legislation. Halo is a charitable Christian organization located in Salisbury, Maryland which provides shelter, meals, and financial and life skills counseling to the homeless at no cost to the taxpayer. Our shelter has capacity for 150 men, women, and children per day with overnight and laundry facilities. We have been successful in innumerable cases from 2007 to the present in assisting folks in getting back on their feet and becoming productive working citizens supporting themselves and their families.

We are deeply concerned that the legislation, which is framed in broad and general terms assigning regulatory details to State administrative agencies, will impose significant additional compliance costs, in time and money, on HALO that will impair its ability to provide its services to the homeless and people in need in our community. We note that there are at least five(5) other shelters in Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester Counties (Village of Hope, Joseph House, Christian Shelter, Diakonia, and the Samaritan House) providing the same or similar services to the homeless that would likewise be adversely affected.

HALO is subject now to oversight and compliance requirements of the County Health, Building Code, and Fire Department rules and regulations which address the safety aspects of HALO services and facilities. Comprehensive Inspection and oversight are presently provided for under local law and administered by these agencies ensuring that HALO and other Shelters in our community are operated safely and responsibly.

Sincerely,

Gary Desjardins
Chairman

SB 1107 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Terry izer

Position: UNF

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Terry Izer, the Superintendent of facilities and men's program at The Hope center at Hagerstown Rescue Mission. I am writing in opposition of SB1107. The Hope Center is a multi- faceted faith-based organization providing various resources to those in need, including overnight shelter services to men 365 nights a year. Our first and foremost responsibility at The Hope Center is to provide spiritual guidance and wellbeing based on our faith and interpretation of scriptures.

Again, The Hope Center provides all services based on our religious values. SB 1107 goes directly against our religious autonomy by allowing State governance and standards on operational policy and procedures to include number and duties of paid staff, procedures for vetting volunteers, as well as admission policies to name a few. Passage of any part of this bill outside of habitability requirements for health/life safety would go against our freedom and autonomy protected under the 1st Amendment. This bill is an attempt to use governmental authority and fear of penalty, to force faith-based organizations to comply with an agenda that differs from the sponsors of this bill.

The homeless community as well as the communities they reside in will be negatively impacted with passage of HB1107 as it will force faith-based shelters to close their doors, putting those we serve on the streets each night. Faith based constituents across the state who have provided shelter services for generations agree they will close their doors rather than go against our religious beliefs. Passage of this bill will guarantee large numbers of shelter beds being lost across the state.

The Hope Center as well as faith-based shelters across the state cannot and will not allow the state to have governance over our ministry operational process.

Terry K. Izer

Superintendent of Facilities and Men's programs

The Hope Center at the Hagerstown Rescue Mission

2024.03.11 ADF Ltr re MD S.B. 1107.pdf

Uploaded by: Gregory Baylor

Position: INFO



March 11, 2024

Maryland Senate
Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee
Room 2 West Wing
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401-1911

Re: Maryland Senate Bill 1107

Dear Chairperson Feldman and Members of the Committee:

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) is one of the leading Christian law firms committed to protecting religious freedom, free speech, marriage and the family, parental rights, and the sanctity of life. It is one of the nation's most respected and successful United States Supreme Court advocates, playing various roles in 74 Supreme Court victories. Since 2011, ADF has represented parties in 15 victories at the Supreme Court. These victories have been on behalf of pastors, churches, religious organizations, college students, family-owned businesses, pro-life pregnancy centers, and many others.

In addition, ADF routinely provides legal analysis of proposed legislation and its impact on constitutionally protected freedoms. The purpose of this letter is to share our concerns about the legality of Senate Bill 1107, pertaining to licensing of homeless shelters.

S.B. 1107 would require the Department of Housing and Community Development to “develop operational standards for homeless shelters that include, at a minimum, standards” for multiple areas of shelter operations. *See* S.B. 1107, § 1 (to be codified at Md. Code Ann. Housing & Community Development § 6-1204(A)).

ADF's concern lies with the following proposed operational standard:

policies that affirm that the homeless shelter may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry or

national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or genetic information.

Id. (to be codified at § 6-1204(A)(16)).

Aspects of this requirement would violate the constitutionally protected rights of many religious homeless shelters. Constitutional difficulties arise from the inclusion of religion, marital status, sexual orientation, and gender identity—especially since the proposal lacks any concrete protections for the religious freedom of the organizations subject to its requirements.

A. Application to Shelters' Employment Practices?

The scope and number of potential constitutional violations depends in part on the answer to an important preliminary question: whether the non-discrimination requirement applies a religious shelter's employment practices.

Although we suspect that the drafters of this language intended that it only reach a shelter's interactions with homeless individuals, the proposed provision could very well be interpreted by the Department or the courts to reach a shelter's personnel policies and practices.

Such an interpretation would violate constitutional protections of religious exercise and free speech. First, the application of *any* non-discrimination rule to "ministerial" employees violates the First Amendment. See *Our Lady of Guadalupe Sch. v. Morrissey-Berru*, 140 S. Ct. 2049 (2020); *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church v. EEOC*, 565 U.S. 171 (2012).

Second, organizations have the freedom to hire only those individuals who share and are willing to communicate the organization's message. See *Dale v. Boy Scouts of Am.*, 530 U.S. 640 (2000).

Third, the First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause and Article 36 of the Maryland Declaration of Rights "limit[] governmental interference with the internal management of religious organizations." *Montrose Christian Sch. v. Walsh*, 363 Md. 565 (Md. Ct. App. 2001).

B. Application to Shelters' Interactions with Homeless Individuals

There can be little doubt that proposed § 6-1204(A)(16) would apply to a shelter's interactions with the homeless individuals it serves. Such application will violate religious shelters' fundamental rights in many instances.

Many religious individuals and organizations hold faith-informed views about marriage, sexuality, and the distinction between the sexes. They believe that marriage is an exclusive union between one man and one woman. They believe that sexual relations outside such a marriage are impermissible. They believe that God created humanity male and female, and that presenting as the opposite sex or attempting to somehow change to the opposite sex is morally problematic.

Shelters holding such religious views may not be able to comply in good conscience with potential interpretations of § 6-1204(A)(16). For example, a shelter for women might be unwilling to permit a man to share sleeping space with women (many of whom may have been subjected to physical and sexual abuse by men), even if he identifies as a woman. [*See Downtown Hope Center v. Municipality of Anchorage.*](#)

Along the same lines, a co-ed shelter might assign individuals to showers, locker rooms, and restrooms based on biological sex rather than gender identity. And many religious individuals and organizations hold that their convictions prevent them from using pronouns that are inconsistent with an individual's biological sex. Finally, some shelters reserve sleeping facilities for married couples to opposite-sex couples.

Some courts and administrative enforcement officials have taken the erroneous view that bans on gender identity and sexual orientation discrimination forbid individuals and organizations from living out these sincerely held convictions. It is reasonable to be concerned that the Department of Housing and Community Development and Maryland courts might interpret the language of S.B. 1107 in this fashion. If they do, they will be violating the constitutional rights of those who follow their beliefs on these issues. *See, e.g., Vlaming v. West Point Sch. Bd.*, 895 S.E.2d 705 (Va. 2023). *See also 303 Creative v. Elenis*, 600 U.S. 570 (2023); *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia*, 593 U.S. 522 (2021); *Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd. v. Colo. Civ. Rts. Comm'n*, 584 U.S. 617 (2018).

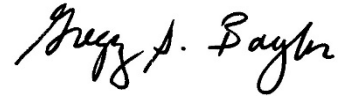
Accordingly, we respectfully recommend that the Committee add a robust religious exemption that ensures religious nonprofits are free both to employ those who share their religious beliefs and to operate consistent with those beliefs. Doing so would avoid constitutional violations and protect fundamental freedoms of speech and religious exercise for these religious organizations.

We respectfully request that the Committee take these concerns into account as it considers the bill.

Letter to MD Senate Energy, Education, and Environment Committee
S.B. 1107
March 11, 2024
Page 4 of 4

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory S. Baylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gregory S. Baylor
Senior Counsel