



P.O. Box 34073
Essex, MD 21221
info@churchesforSOH.org
443-764-4249

February 14, 2024

To: Hon. Marc Korman,
Hon. Regina T. Boyce
Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: HB0577
Department of Housing and Community Development –
Homeless Shelter Licensing Program – Establishment

Dear Delegates:

The position of the Board of Churches for Streets of Hope, Inc., is unfavorable to this bill.

Our organization, a coalition of about thirty churches in SE Baltimore County, has a cold-weather shelter for 16 men under the umbrella of our Community Care Center. We are housed in space donated by Boulevard Christian Church.

We feel that if the rules stated in this bill were applied, our shelter would have to close, as we would not have the funds to continue to operate with those constraints in place.

Most volunteer-led shelters like ours must pass both a fire inspection, a building inspection, and obtain a use and occupancy permit. This virtually guarantees the clients a safe place to stay.

Not all volunteer-led shelters (most are in churches) have a food preparation and surface area that would meet requirements. Most rely on meals that are prepared offsite and brought in, with proper temperature control. The model we use, where meal teams from churches provide hot meals every day for the clients, has been in place for almost fifteen years. Our clients rave about the quality of the food and many of them show a healthy weight gain during their stay.

There are other areas that could also impact smaller shelters such as ours, and we urge you to have more conversations with shelter providers throughout the State in order to craft the most helpful legislation. We certainly agree that some oversight would likely be beneficial for all shelters, but urge you to modify the bill so those shelters that are already running can remain so.

Very truly yours,

Barbara Nock
Co-Founder and Interim Executive Director
Churches for Streets of Hope, Inc.

Rekindling Hope Where There is Homelessness
www.churchesforSOH.org