



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

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

HB 734

February 13, 2024

TO: Members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 734 – Municipalities – Vagrancy – Repeal of Authority to Prohibit

POSITION: Support

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB)/House Bill (HB) 734.

HB 734 would remove the authority of a municipality to prohibit vagrancy, which is poorly defined but often encompasses any act of movement from one place to another without stable employment or housing.

Vagrancy laws are often ambiguous and broad, leading to inequitable enforcement methods that serve to criminalize houselessness, poverty, loitering, or unemployment. This punishment-based system penalizes people for lacking material resources and can lead to worse individual outcomes due to fines, traumatization, and criminal records. Although many individual jurisdictions have moved away from criminalizing vagrancy, this bill will codify the prohibition of this harmful and counterproductive practice. We must instead turn to models of community care and support that are person-centered, non-punitive, and trauma-informed to identify sustainable solutions.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a report to support HB 734.