



**Maryland Commission
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

Bill Title: Housing and Community Development -
Homeless Shelter Certification Program - Establishment

Bill Number(s): [HB0093/SB0234](#)

Position: FAVORABLE

Date: January 17, 2025

Submitted by: Jeremy Browning, Director of the
Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

To:

House Environment and Transportation Committee

The Hon. Marc Korman, Chair
The Hon. Regina T. Boyce, Vice Chair

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

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

Testimony on behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs:

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, created by the Maryland General Assembly, works to serve LGBTQIA+ Marylanders by galvanizing community voices, researching and addressing challenges, and advocating for policies that advance equity and inclusion. The Commission envisions a Maryland where all LGBTQIA+ people can live full and authentic lives. As a vital resource, the Commission collaborates with public officials, agencies, and community partners to ensure the rights and dignity of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders are protected and respected.

On behalf of the Commission, we strongly support House Bill 93 and Senate Bill 234, which establish a Homeless Shelter Certification Program under the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). These bills represent an essential step toward ensuring the safety, dignity, and rights of all individuals experiencing homelessness in Maryland, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, through the implementation of basic standards for homeless shelters.

By establishing a certification program, these bills provide a framework to set clear operational and habitability standards, guaranteeing that shelter residents receive necessary care, support, and protection. The program will also include admission standards that help prevent discrimination based on race, color, religion, ancestry or national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or genetic information. This anti-discrimination provision is critical to ensuring that marginalized community members, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, are treated with dignity and respect while accessing temporary shelter.

This initiative is particularly significant for LGBTQIA+ communities, who face disproportionate rates of homelessness, poverty, and housing insecurity. Research underscores the urgency of addressing these disparities:

- The National Center for Transgender Equality's *2022 U.S. Trans Survey Early Insights Report* found that more than one-third (34%) of transgender respondents were experiencing poverty, and nearly one-third had experienced homelessness in their lifetime.
- The Williams Institute's report, *LGBT People and Housing Affordability, Discrimination, and Homelessness*, highlights that LGBTQIA+ people have higher rates of poverty, lower rates of homeownership, and higher rates of homelessness compared to non-LGBTQIA+ people.
- True Colors United's report, *At the Intersections*, reveals that LGBTQ+ youth and young adults are 120% more likely to experience homelessness than their non-LGBTQ+ peers. Service providers estimate that 20-40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+.

These disparities demonstrate the critical need for measures like the Homeless Shelter Certification Program to ensure that homeless shelters are safe, affirming, and inclusive for LGBTQIA+ individuals and other marginalized populations.

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs commends Delegate Mary Washington, the additional bill sponsors, and DHCD for addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. We are grateful for their leadership in advancing equality and non-discrimination within Maryland's homeless shelter system.

For these reasons, the Commission strongly urges a favorable report on House Bill 93 and Senate Bill 234.

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.