

**January 17, 2025**

The Honorable Senator Brian J. Feldman  
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Support for Senate Bill 234 – Housing and Community Development – Homeless Shelter Certification Program – Establishment**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

On behalf of Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), I am writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 234 (SB0234), the “Housing and Community Development – Homeless Shelter Certification Program – Establishment.” This legislation is a vital measure to enhance the quality and equity of shelter services for Maryland’s most vulnerable populations, including Latino and immigrant communities who often face systemic barriers in accessing safe and dignified housing.

The Latino community represents over 12% of Maryland’s population, yet continues to experience disproportionate rates of housing insecurity and homelessness due to economic inequities and limited access to affordable housing options. SB0234 proposes to:

- **Establish Minimum Standards for Homeless Shelters:** By requiring shelters to meet operational and safety guidelines, the bill ensures that all Maryland residents, including Latinos and immigrants, can access dignified and reliable housing during periods of crisis.
- **Protect Resident Rights:** The development of clear standards for the protection of shelter residents’ rights builds trust and encourages vulnerable populations, including immigrant families, to seek the resources they need without fear of discrimination.
- **Facilitate Improved Data Collection:** The requirement for shelters to participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) will allow for better tracking of demographics and resource needs, ensuring targeted and equitable distribution of funding and services to under-resourced communities.

MLU has long advocated for policies that address systemic housing inequities, protect vulnerable populations, and empower under-resourced communities to thrive. SB0234 aligns with these priorities by establishing a framework for improving shelter services and ensuring that no Maryland resident is left without the safety and dignity of adequate housing.

We strongly urge the members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to support this critical legislation. By advancing SB0234, Maryland reaffirms its commitment to equity and justice for all its residents.

Sincerely,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.  
Communications and Public Affairs Specialist  
Maryland Latinos Unidos  
[corbejr@mdlatinosunidos.org](mailto:corbejr@mdlatinosunidos.org)