

House Bill 93
Homeless Shelter Certification Program - Establishment
Environment & Transportation Committee
February 4, 2025
Support with Amendments

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports HB 93, with amendments, which establishes a homeless shelter certification program within the Department of Housing and Community Development. The bill requires shelter operators to meet comprehensive operational standards, building requirements, and resident protection measures to obtain state certification permitting them to operate. The program includes a tiered certification system that accounts for differences in shelter size, duration of services, and intensity of support provided.

For a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success, and welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities.

As Maryland's largest private provider of human services, we offer comprehensive support to individuals facing homelessness and poverty in Baltimore City and in other counties in Maryland. At Sarah's House in Anne Arundel County, we provide vital services including emergency shelter and project-based supportive housing, alongside a variety of other resources for families experiencing homelessness. Serving up to 125 people daily, with half being children, our mission is to foster positive change within families by delivering a diverse range of services and support.

We support the goal of this bill, ensuring that all homeless shelters in Maryland provide safe, accessible shelter for those in need. The establishment of standardized operational requirements and resident protections through a tiered certification system represents a step forward, as Maryland currently lacks any statewide standards for homeless shelter operations.

However, we ask that this bill includes an amendment to address the following concern:

1. At Sarah's House, located in Anne Arundel County, we are subject to regulations imposed by the Department of the Army due to our location on federal land. Specifically, we must comply with Installation Access Control requirements regarding criminal conviction history and immigration status. These federal requirements may conflict with:
 - The bill's non-discrimination provisions (Section 6-1405)
 - Admission criteria restrictions
 - Resident screening processes

We propose an amendment that explicitly addresses how shelters operating on federal property can maintain compliance with both federal requirements and state certification standards, particularly when federal installation access controls create admission restrictions beyond those contemplated in the bill.

For these reasons, Catholic Charities urges the committee to issue a favorable report, with amendments, to address the concerns noted above on House Bill 93.

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy