

**Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly,**

I am writing to share my personal experience with homelessness and my strong support for HB 93, the Homeless Shelter Certification Program bill. As someone who has experienced homelessness, I can speak from firsthand experience about the challenges of seeking shelter and the urgent need for improved standards in homeless shelters across our state.

When I was homeless, I faced an overwhelming number of barriers—not just to finding a place to sleep, but to finding a safe, clean, and supportive environment where I could begin to rebuild my life. Far too many shelters were not places of refuge but of despair. Overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, lack of privacy, and even safety concerns made shelters feel more like holding pens than havens for those of us in need. And as a transgender person, I knew the likelihood was minimal of finding culturally competent conditions where I could be affirmed in my identity and treated as a person worthy of dignity and respect.

What's even more disheartening is knowing that my experience isn't unique. In my work with people experiencing homelessness since coming out of my own situation, it is far more common to hear people would prefer to sleep on the sidewalk or on a bench rather than risk their health and safety in a shelter. Many individuals facing homelessness feel the same way. They are reluctant to use shelters because of the lack of safety, cleanliness, and respect. Some fear violence or theft, while others struggle with overcrowding and the absence of any real support. This cycle leads people to avoid shelters altogether, leaving them exposed to even greater risks. This is why HB 93 is so important.

This bill would require homeless shelters to meet basic standards of quality, care, and safety, ensuring that every individual who seeks shelter has access to a safe and respectful environment. It is not enough to provide a bed; we must provide a space where people can heal, find stability, and begin to rebuild their lives. The standards proposed in this bill would ensure that shelters are not just places to sleep, but places of hope, safety, and support.

As someone who has lived through the daily struggle of homelessness, I can tell you that people experiencing homelessness do not want to remain in this situation. They want the opportunity to improve their lives, to find stability, and to be treated with the dignity that every person deserves. However, when shelters do not meet even basic standards of care, they inadvertently create more obstacles. This bill is a step in the right direction to ensure that shelters become true sources of help, not places that drive people further away from the support they need.

I urge you to support HB 93 and take this crucial step toward ensuring that all homeless individuals in Maryland have access to safe, humane, and dignified shelter. No one should ever have to choose between enduring the dangers of the street and enduring the dehumanizing conditions of a shelter.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
August Page, MSW Candidate  
District 43A