



**Testimony HOUSE BILL 392
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
February 4, 2025
Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland's community development sector and serves nearly 200 member organizations. CDN—focuses on small affordable housing developers, housing counseling agencies and community-based non- profits across the state of Maryland. The mission of CDN is to promote, strengthen and advocate for the community development sector throughout Maryland's urban, suburban and rural communities.

House Bill 392 will allow a very limited exception to the two-party consent requirement to record a conversation for the purposes of testing in aid of the enforcement of fair housing laws.

Recording of a fair housing test is the best evidence admissible in court that discrimination is occurring and will facilitate effective remediation.

Marylanders are protected from discrimination in housing by state, local, and federal law. It is illegal to deny someone equal access to housing based on a broad range of demographic characteristics, including race, gender, sexuality, gender identity, disability, or familial status. In 2023, the General Assembly extended protections against discrimination to include persons who use a government voucher to pay rent when it enacted the Housing Opportunities Made Equal or "HOME" Act. Nevertheless, housing discrimination in Maryland persists.

Fair housing testing has long been used to root out discrimination. Testing involves the use of trained individuals who apply for housing to measure whether persons with a particular protected characteristic are treated differently than a person without the characteristic. Often, this will involve matched pairs – persons who are similarly situated except for the tested demographic characteristics – to measure whether they receive the same information or opportunity. of the

House Bill 392 will facilitate improved fair housing testing in Maryland.

We urge a favorable report for HB 392.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director, Community Development Network