



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR TESTIMONY

Senate Bill 463 Municipalities – Vagrancy – Repeal of Authority to Prohibit

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

For the record, I am Senator C. Anthony Muse, representing the 26th Legislative District in Prince George's County. I respectfully submit this written testimony in support of **Senate Bill 463**, which repeals the authority of municipalities to prohibit vagrancy.

Senate Bill 463 addresses an outdated and overly broad power that has historically been enforced in a manner that is inconsistent with modern principles of fairness, equity, and constitutional due process. Vagrancy laws do not target harmful conduct; instead, they often criminalize status, poverty, and homelessness.

Maryland law already provides municipalities with ample authority to address legitimate public safety concerns. Municipalities retain the power to enforce laws related to disorderly conduct, nuisances, vice, gambling, and other conduct-based offenses. SB 463 does not weaken public safety or limit a municipality's ability to maintain order. Rather, it removes a redundant and problematic tool that has been shown to be susceptible to arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement.

Vagrancy prohibitions have historically been used to target individuals who are unhoused, unemployed, or simply present in public spaces without resources. Such laws do not solve the underlying challenges of homelessness or economic insecurity. Instead, they cycle vulnerable individuals through the criminal justice system, creating barriers to employment, housing, and stability.

Senate Bill 463 reflects a more thoughtful and modern approach. It recognizes that public safety is best achieved by addressing conduct that poses real harm, not by criminalizing people for existing in public spaces. Repealing municipal authority to prohibit vagrancy promotes consistency across jurisdictions and ensures that enforcement efforts are focused on behavior, not circumstance.

This bill imposes no cost on the State and does not interfere with municipal authority to govern responsibly. It simply aligns Maryland law with constitutional principles and best practices that prioritize fairness and effective governance.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **favorable report on Senate Bill 463**.