

**FAVORABLE Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 274  
Fair Housing and Housing Discrimination – Regulations, Intent, and  
Discriminatory Effect**

**Judicial Proceedings  
February 3, 2026  
2:00 pm**

**Jocelyn I. Collins  
Public Policy Partners, on behalf of MSEA**

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 274. This legislation strengthens Maryland's fair housing laws by clarifying enforcement authority, reinforcing the obligation to affirmatively further fair housing, and addressing discriminatory housing practices based on their effects, not solely on intent.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools and community colleges, teaching and supporting our almost 900,000 K-12 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA represents more than 44 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA's support for Senate Bill 274 is grounded in our long-standing policy commitments. **MSEA Resolution F.23 (Fair Housing)** states that *fair housing practices should be broadened and strengthened to assure each citizen an equal opportunity to reside in a neighborhood of their choice*. Senate Bill 274 directly advances this principle by modernizing Maryland law to reflect how housing discrimination operates in practice today.

Many barriers to fair housing are structural or systemic, arising from policies that may appear neutral but reinforce segregation or unequal access to housing and opportunity. Senate Bill 274 broadens fair housing protections by clarifying that unlawful discrimination may be established based on discriminatory effects, not solely on explicit intent. This focus on outcomes is essential to ensuring meaningful and equitable housing choices for families, workers, and communities.



The bill also strengthens enforcement by affirming the authority of the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to adopt regulations to implement and enforce fair housing obligations, including the duty to affirmatively further fair housing. Clear authority and accountability are critical to ensuring that fair housing laws are effective and enforceable.

Importantly, Senate Bill 274 preserves appropriate safeguards for legitimate, nondiscriminatory policies. The bill recognizes that actions taken to achieve substantial, lawful objectives do not constitute unlawful discrimination when no less discriminatory alternative exists. This balanced approach protects good-faith actors while ensuring that systemic inequities are addressed.

For MSEA members, fair housing is not an abstract issue. Educators and education support professionals are renters, homeowners, and community members whose housing stability affects their ability to work, remain in the profession, and serve students effectively. Discriminatory housing outcomes disproportionately affect lower-paid school staff and educators of color, contribute to workforce instability, and exacerbate inequities that schools are asked to address every day.

By strengthening fair housing protections, Senate Bill 274 supports more integrated communities, greater housing stability, and stronger public schools. The bill aligns squarely with MSEA's values and policy positions.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 274.