

**HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY  
IN SUPPORT OF  
HB 564 – Department of Aging – Assisted Living Program Subsidies –  
Determinations**

*House Appropriations Committee  
February 25, 2020*



**Health Care for the Homeless supports HB 564**, which would increase the Senior Assisted Living Group Home Subsidy for the first time in over 20 years. The bill mandates an increase from \$650 to \$1,000, while also tying the subsidy to the consumer price index, ensuring that it will increase with inflation.

Health Care for the Homeless provides care with dignity for approximately 10,000 people per year. Our services include medical, behavioral health, psychiatry, dental, case management, community health workers, and supportive housing for individuals and families of all ages. In recent years, we have seen a crisis emerge among seniors experiencing homelessness. Among adults experiencing homelessness, forty-four percent (44%) have experienced their *first episode* of homelessness after age 50.<sup>1</sup> Studies showed an increase of thirty percent (30%) in seniors age 65 or older experiencing homelessness from 2013-2015.<sup>2</sup> This is, in large part, due to the dire lack of affordable housing available. In fact, there are ten (10) older adults for every one unit of supportive housing for the elderly.<sup>3</sup> In one study of 3 cities, projected growth rates of those aged 65+ experiencing homelessness ranged from a 2.5 growth rate to a threefold growth rate by 2030.<sup>4</sup>

This is unacceptable. Seniors should not have to experience homelessness or live in unsafe conditions because there are simply not enough resources to keep them safe and healthy. This bill will directly serve to reverse these tragic trends and help ensure a life with dignity for Maryland's seniors. We urge a favorable report.

*Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland's leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We work to prevent and end homelessness for vulnerable individuals and families by providing quality, integrated health care and promoting access to affordable housing and sustainable incomes through direct service, advocacy, and community engagement. We deliver integrated medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, and housing support services for over 10,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. For more information, visit [www.hchmd.org](http://www.hchmd.org).*

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<sup>1</sup> Brown, et al., PLoS One, *Pathways to Homelessness among Older Homeless Adults: Results from the HOPE HOME Study* (May 2016), available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4862628/>.

<sup>2</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless, *Homelessness Among Elderly Persons* (Sept. 2009), available at <https://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/Elderly.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> CSH, *Healthy Aging in Supportive Housing* (Sept. 2016), available at <https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Healthy-Aging-Toolkit.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Culhane, et al., *The Emerging Crisis of Aged Homelessness: Could Housing Solutions Be Funded by Avoidance of Excess Shelter, Hospital and Nursing Home Costs?* (Jan 2019), available at <https://www.aisp.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Emerging-Crisis-of-Aged-Homelessness-1.pdf>.