

**Frederick County Local Management Board (LMB)**

**SUPPORT**

**SB 207 – Unaccompanied Minors in Need of Shelter and Supportive Services**

**Hearing of the Senate Education, Health and Education Committee, February 5, 2020**

**Testimony on behalf of the Frederick County Local Management Board**

**The Frederick County Local Management Board (LMB)** supports the enactment of SB 207, which establishes that unaccompanied minors who are experiencing homelessness have legal capacity to consent to admission to sheltering programs registered with the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development.

As a **LMB**, our role in the community is to identify needs and gaps in services for children, youth and families and to identify resources to address those areas of need. Since FY18, our Board has been committed to funding organizations providing direct services to unaccompanied youth in Frederick County. A more narrow population of unaccompanied youth, homeless high school students within Frederick County Public Schools, remains a top priority for our LMB. Our current vendor, Student Homelessness Initiative Partnership (SHIP), employs case managers to connect these students to all community supports needed for physical and mental health, academic success, access to recreational activities, and career readiness and employment activities. While these services are necessary to allow the students to move forward toward self-sufficiency, they do not address the most pressing need of stable housing for these same youth. Without access to housing, students are transient, have higher rates of absenteeism, are more likely participate in high-risk behaviors and are overwhelmed by many other stressors that negatively affect their educational progress.

It is critical that our community have the resources needed to address basic housing for youth in our community. Having access to safe housing and the ability to consent to admission through sheltering programs is paramount to the success of these vulnerable youth. **Passing SB 207** is a critical step towards addressing this issue.

**The Frederick County Local Management Board (LMB) strongly urges the committee to issue a Favorable Report on SB 207.** Please contact **Leslie Barnes-Keating at 301-600-1447** with any questions.