



Welfare Advocates

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 231 Housing Opportunities Made Equal Act

House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 4, 2020

Welfare Advocates is a statewide coalition of social service organizations, advocacy groups, faith communities, and community members, whose mission it is to educate ourselves, and the wider community and to advocate for an adequate safety net and public policies that support families moving towards economic stability.

HB 231 prohibits landlords from discriminating against potential renters based on their source of income. As HB 231 protects one of Maryland's most vulnerable populations - those currently receiving safety-net services - Welfare Advocates respectfully urges support for HB 231.

Affordable housing remains one of the most critical – and difficult to secure – needs for low-income Marylanders. One of the first steps to economic security is obtaining stable housing. This challenge is particularly pertinent in the current economic climate, where more and more Marylanders are finding their housing options compromised. Lack of permanent housing, in turn, places individuals at risk for other challenges such as finding employment without a mailing address and taking care of critical medical needs. Passing HB 231 will reduce homelessness and increase the overall health and economic stability of Maryland communities.

With significant state and federal government resources devoted to programs that help Marylanders find housing, it is imperative that those benefits actually provide recipients with the opportunity to obtain stable permanent housing. Unfortunately, many Maryland residents are unable to utilize these legal sources of income to obtain housing because of discrimination, which ultimately leads to concentrated poverty and economic isolation. Additionally, when families are unable to locate landlords willing to accept their income, they have to resort to state-funded emergency and transitional shelters. Removing undue barriers to housing for Marylanders living in or near poverty – like source of income discrimination - will result in financial savings to the state during this crucial period of economic recovery.

WA appreciates your consideration, and respectfully urges a favorable report on HB 231.

Submitted by Lisa Klingenmaier, Chair
