

**HB 800- Housing Opportunities Commission- Alterations
Tuesday, March 10, 2020
Environment and Transportation Committee
Favorable**

TO: Hon. Kumar Barve, Chair and members of the Environment and
Transportation Committee
From: Gino Renne, UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO

Good afternoon Chairman Barve and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

There's a premise that governs public service and that premise is that public service should provide a public good. The Housing Opportunities Commission's mission is providing housing to persons with demonstrated needs; a vital public service. The public deserves transparency and accountability.

From Maryland's Open Meetings Act:

1. *The ability of the public, its representatives, and the media to attend, report on, and broadcast meetings of public bodies and to witness the phases of the deliberation, policy formation, and decision making of public bodies ensures the accountability of government to the citizens of the State.*
2. *The conduct of public business in open meetings increases the faith of the public in government and enhances the effectiveness of the public in fulfilling its role in a democratic society.*

Under the American "rule of law" tradition, government institutions should protect citizens against abuses of power. In the past, part of that protection meant publicly disseminating the information via newspapers or other media. We have moved beyond the limits of secondary dissemination. To that end, we agree that HOC meetings should be open to the public and made available via video streaming.

Proposed budgets and audits should be regularly made public on the Commission's website and made available both to the County and State lawmakers.

Expenditures that are greater than \$25,000 should be posted on a searchable website. Other agencies in the federal government, in our state and our county are required to disclose their expenditures in a similar manner.

We should allow the public we serve open access to the decisions, processes and procedures of our public agencies. This is good governance legislation.

On behalf of the members of UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO, I urge you to pass HB 800-Housing Opportunities Commission, Alterations.