

**HB 807- Housing Opportunities Commission- Selection of Chair
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,

I am writing on behalf of the 8000 members that our union represents, including over 200 employees of the Housing Opportunities Commission. We had the opportunity to testify in front of members of the Montgomery County Delegation's, Education, Elections, and Housing Committee back in September. In that hearing, we asked members of the committee to improve oversight, transparency and accountability at the Housing Opportunities Commission. This legislation addresses these priorities.

When our members, HOC residents and members of the public have brought concerns to the Commission, time and time again, there have been no questions, no follow-up and no engagement. Appointment of the chair by an elected County Executive, who answers to the people, rather than appointed commissioners, provides for greater accountability.

HB 807 mirrors law in Prince George's County where the County Executive selects the chair of its Housing Authority from the commissioners. Similarly, the chair of the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission is made by the appointing authority (the County Council in Montgomery County and the County Executive in Prince George's County).

The need for affordable housing and supportive services in this County is at an all-time high. It is more important than ever that the agency is accountable to the public.

The HOC Commission oversees a combined budget of over \$430 million dollars and serves thousands of Montgomery County residents. HB 807 is prudent legislation to provide accountability to the public that the Commission serves. We ask for a favorable report.