

Brock Reich
brock@crofmaryland.com
410-236-1497

Senate Bill 530
Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) Act
Hearing of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, February 4, 2020

SUPPORT

Good Afternoon. My name is Brock Reich with CR of Maryland, based out of Baltimore County. On behalf of our company, I would like to express my support for Senate Bill 530, the Housing Opportunities Made Equal Act.

For close to 5 years we have been fortunate enough to provide high quality housing to participants/tenants of the Baltimore County Office of Housing, Housing Authority of Baltimore City, Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership, and Project Plase, among other entities. To date, we have worked with over 200 families receiving some type of housing assistance.

While there are others that may be able to provide research that supports the positive effects of open housing for low-income households or those who have experienced the benefits themselves, I am able to share what I have experienced in our office. This year we were able to help a mother and her disabled son reunite in a fully handicap accessible home, after the son had spent the last few years in a nursing facility because they could not find a home that could accommodate his needs. Countless families have told us that they have found their forever home or have broke down in tears when they received the keys to their home on move in day.

Since we began working with the voucher programs in 2016 we have had a tenant turnover of 9% Included in that 9% are two families who were able to move on from the programs and purchase a property of their own and multiple families who moved to another property within our Portfolio. During that same time, we have experienced a turnover for market rate households of 38.5%. For these expired leases, the average length of stay for a household receiving housing assistance was 23 months while market rate length of stay was 19 months.

At first glance, some property owners may be intimidated by the inspection process or perception of work needed to make home compliant. Our experience with the Housing Quality Standards Move in inspection is that it is equal to the rental inspection required for all properties in Baltimore County and Baltimore City. In addition, HQS inspections performed by these inspectors count towards the county rental registration requirements. This can save a property owner up to \$200 per property. The annual inspections performed by these inspectors are equally as valuable for us as property managers. Although we do perform our own company inspections on all of our properties, there is an added benefit of having a third party inspecting a property and notifying us of any issues that the household members may not have shared.

In other words, leasing to someone with a voucher is not a significant burden on the landlord. With 16 states and multiple counties in the Maryland already passing similar bills, now is the time for Maryland to open housing opportunities to all households and remove any stigma related to families receiving housing assistance. Thank You.

Brock Reich, CR of Maryland