



# THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

Support  
SB 530 - Housing Opportunities Made Equal Act  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2/4/2020  
Presented by Rev. Kathy Shahinian

Good afternoon Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. My name is Rev. Kathy Shahinian, Public Policy Liaison for the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland and I am here today to support SB 530 – Housing Opportunities Made Equal Act.

SB 530 prohibits landlords from discrimination against potential tenants based on the source of their income. The Md Episcopal Diocese strongly supports SB 530 as a means of insuring fairness, greater economic opportunity, and increased housing for seniors, working families, persons with disabilities and veterans.

The Church holds that one of the government’s primary responsibilities is to ensure that the most basic needs of its people are met. In the United States, our Federal government does this, in part, through the Housing Choice Voucher Program (known as Section 8). Maryland serves the housing needs of its lowest-income residents through the State’s Rental Allowance Program (RAP). Others receive housing assistance through programs designed for veterans or those with disabilities. But while a family or individual may be successful in accessing assistance through Section 8 or RAP, in most parts of Maryland, they encounter another challenge in their search for housing. With the exception of Frederick, Howard and Montgomery Counties and the city of Annapolis, Marylanders often are discriminated against in their search for subsidized housing.

It is common to see newspaper or internet ads for the renting of an apartment or home that contain the words, “No Section 8”. It is more common for working poor Marylanders to hear this refrain when they inquire into available housing. Such discrimination is also faced by people who base their income, in part or in total, on disability or cash assistance, child support or alimony. For those that encounter this discrimination it can be frustrating and demoralizing.

Individuals and families having the lawful means to rent or buy housing should not be denied housing based on the source of financial means. Those with the income or credit worthiness and other necessary credentials to rent or buy should not be denied the ability to find housing.

In 2012 The Episcopal Church adopted resolutions:

That all dioceses develop a plan to raise the quality and dignity of life for the poor and homeless<sup>1</sup>

The US Government work to end discriminatory practices that leave women, children and seniors vulnerable to housing discrimination <sup>2</sup>

Recognizing housing as a fundamental human right, The Episcopal Diocese of Md respectfully Requests a favorable report for SB 530.

<sup>1</sup> The Episcopal Church Resolution 2012 – C038 [http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts\\_resolution.pl?resolution=2012-C038](http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2012-C038)

<sup>2</sup> The Episcopal Church Resolution 2012-A138 [http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts\\_resolution.pl?resolution=2012-A138](http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2012-A138)