

**Testimony on HB105 Department of Housing & Community Development
Community Development Administration Compliance Monitor Reporting**

Sponsored By Delegate Shaneka Henson

January 24, 2021

Mrs. Chairman, Staff and Members of said Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the citizens of Bay Ridge Gardens Apartment Community Complex and the Annapolis Community at large. My name is Rev. Samuel J. Colbert, Pastor of John Wesley United Methodist Church, 2114 Bay Ridge Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21403, jwesley2114@yahoo.com; 443.822.5537. I have also had the privilege of serving as the President of the Annapolis Ministerial Alliance and the Greater Annapolis Ministerium. Both of these organizations take ownership and pride in community development.

Thank you, Mrs. Chairman for your steadfast leadership in support of HB105 during your time of service in the House of Delegate. You have been a true champion of these crucial housing programs and a tireless advocate for low-income households who need housing help. Together, with your team you have introduced the most important housing legislation before the Legislature and I strongly support this bill, which would give meaning and purpose to the residents living in these communities in which DHCD oversees HUD throughout the State of MD.

The Need for Affordable Housing Is Great and Growing

The need for the Department of Housing & Community Development which oversees HUD compliance on more than 22,000 subsidized rental units located throughout Maryland's 323 counties and Baltimore City would improve communication between the residents and the local business office. As an advocate for the Bay Ridge Gardens Complex Communities the past year has been a death sentence for many of the residents, not knowing what the full nature of their rental agreement is. Often trying to make an apartment with the Property Manager is non-void. As this community is constantly sold and resold and the residents are left not knowing what their full rights and benefits are, therefore, I support HB105 which requires DHCD to publish annually a report on its compliance monitoring of HUD assisted properties.

These families work minimum wage jobs and devote more than half of their income to housing. This leaves little money left over for other critical necessities like food, transportation, childcare, healthcare, and utilities. HB105 would also allow DHCD to receive comments from affected residents on its website as well as provide access to the annual report.

I know from my conversations with residents of Bay Ridge Gardens and other communities within Annapolis what they face is not unique. Every resident confronts this challenge of not knowing what the fine print says or even knowledge of their full rental and property compliance is.

By passing HB105, I believe this would help to transform lives by creating quality, affordable living environments that lift up families; help children thrive; support seniors, people with special needs, and veterans; and permanently house persons at risk of or experiencing homelessness. They contribute to community revitalization by inspiring business growth, infrastructure advances, transportation solutions, and much more.

Thank you for your commendable efforts to support to give transparency to low-income housing renters. I am honored to have had this opportunity to testify. I stand ready to assist you in any way I can.