



March 30, 2022

Dear Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee Members,

I'm Jen Broderick, Executive Director of Bridges to Housing Stability, a nonprofit in Howard County Maryland. On behalf of Bridges. I am writing in support of HB 878.

Bridges to Housing Stability has been a nonprofit focused on preventing and ending homelessness through affordable housing solutions since 1990. Housing prices have been soaring in Howard County for the past year. Rents on even the Class C (more naturally occurring affordable housing units) have gone up at least two hundred dollars a month on average since 2020, greatly outpacing normal inflation rates and the modest income increases of minimum wage workers.

Housing is one of the best researched social determinants of health. Chronically homeless individuals have more health and mental health issues, and a shorter lifespan than housed individuals. This is often due to the toxic stress housing instability causes, that can lead to increased substance abuse and overdose risk.

I served on the Housing Opportunities Task Force in 2019- early 2021 that looked at ways that the County could increase housing for low-income, moderate income, people with disabilities, and seniors. One of the key recommendations from the resulting plan is having a Housing Trust fund. These funds can be used with versatility to help meet the needs of these populations equitably.

Housing Trust funds have been used successfully to expand housing opportunities in many other Maryland Counties in recent years. As the price of housing in Howard County continues to rise, and the available land where building new development can go up shrinks, it is important to have a trust fund that can support various activities to keep vulnerable populations housed in the county.

One of the ways that Bridges could help with the 6000+ units of affordable housing needed, is to use some available funds as a match to continue to purchase scattered site housing units in multi-family developments, and keep them rented at affordable levels, so low-income households are not rent burdened. This is one possible use of Housing trust funds that would keep units available throughout the county for low wage workers.

The Housing Trust fund will be essential for improving housing opportunities for those who most need stable housing solutions in the county. I hope you will support HB 878

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me anytime at 410-312-5760 ext. 117 or jennifer@bridges2hs.org

Thank you

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