



MARYLAND
LEGAL AID

Advancing
Human Rights and
Justice for All

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January 21, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building
Room 251
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: Testimony of Maryland Legal Aid in Support of House Bill 71 –
Manufactured Homes-Conversion to Real Property and Sale of Manufactured
Housing Communities (Manufactured Housing Modernization Act)**

Dear Chair Barve and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important legislation. Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) is a non-profit law firm that provides free legal services to the State's low-income and vulnerable residents, including abused and neglected children, nursing home residents, and veterans. With 12 offices serving residents in each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions, MLA handles civil legal cases involving a wide range of issues, including family law, housing, public benefits, consumer law, and criminal record expungements to remove barriers to obtaining child custody, housing, driver's licenses, and employment. This letter serves as notice that Gregory Countess, Esq, will testify in support of HB 71 on behalf of MLA at the request of Delegate Vaughan Stewart. MLA supports this Bill and asks that the committee give it a favorable report.

HB 71 promotes housing stability for Maryland families. The mobile home attains the status of real property if the mobile homeowner does not own the land the mobile home is located. Further, HB 71 provides essential notice requirements to community members before the owner of a mobile home community may accept an offer for sale or transfer and a reasonable period for community members to seek and obtain financing to purchase the community.

Members of a manufactured home community tend to be low income and are often seniors on a fixed income who make a significant investment in their housing when they purchase a mobile home. These structures are not considered real property in Maryland, even though they are not "mobile." The structure is often the most valuable asset and only shelter the owner may possess. Owners of these structures make a significant investment because they want to have a permanent home and want to own that home. At present, members of manufactured home communities have few protections if the community owner wants to transfer or sell. HB71 creates fundamental transparency and fairness for community members to maintain their housing and promotes reasonable notice requirements.

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Maryland Legal Aid's responsibility is to serve indigent Marylanders' legal needs, but MLA's mission is the advancement of Human Rights and Justice for all. This includes the right to safe and habitable housing. However, it also includes the right to equality before courts and tribunals and equal protection of the law as enshrined in Articles 14 and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This bill addresses many critical issues for the residents of mobile home communities and the owners of manufactured homes who reside in those communities.

For these reasons, Maryland Legal Aid asks this committee for a favorable report on HB 71.

Sincerely,

/s/Gregory Countess, Esq.

Gregory Countess, Esq.

Director of Advocacy for Housing and Community Economic Development

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