



## **Testimony to the House Environment & Transportation Committee**

### **HB71: Manufactured Housing Modernization Act**

#### **Position: Favorable**

January 25, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
Room 251, HOB  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
cc: Members, Environment and Transportation Committee

Honorable Chair Barve and Members of the Committee:

We are writing to express our strong support for HB71. CASA is the largest membership-based immigrant rights organization in the mid-Atlantic region, with more than 90,000 members in Maryland. Our mission is to create a more just society by building power and improving the quality of life in working class and immigrant communities. We envision a future where our members stand in their own power, our families live free from discrimination and fear, and our diverse communities thrive as we work with our partners to achieve full human rights for all.

For nearly forty years, CASA has employed grassroots community organizing to bring our communities closer together and fight for justice, while simultaneously providing much needed services to these communities, helping to ensure that low-income immigrants are able to live rich and full lives. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage our communities, we see dramatic negative impacts on our members. Despite the short-term security offered by federal aid, low-income tenants find themselves in especially precarious positions, unsure of their future.

This is especially true in mobile home communities, which are an important component of affordable housing. Mobile home residents own the home but not the ground that it sits upon. These households pay a monthly rent to the owner of a manufactured housing community. Should the owner of the community decide to develop the land and eject the residents, the residents have little recourse. Despite the term "mobile", it is actually extremely costly and difficult to move manufactured homes, often costing thousands of dollars to move them, and this money is far beyond what most residents of manufactured housing can afford. Many are forced to abandon their homes. Those who can move their homes to another Park do so at great expense, far away from their communities and

schools, where they are susceptible to the possibility of the exact same problem they just escaped.

CASA members living in mobile home communities have found themselves subject to an array of abuses at the hands of the landowners, including deficient upkeep of communal spaces, skyrocketing rents, overcharges for water and other basic utilities, and arbitrary or discriminatory enforcement of rules and standards that the owners themselves set. Most tenants have little or no recourse if the owner decides to force them to leave. Increasingly, private equity firms have been purchasing manufactured housing communities as investment opportunities for the past decade. When that happens, communities have seen their rents and fees increase monthly costs by 40%-60%. This makes the last bastion of affordable housing unaffordable for low-income families.

HB71 addresses these challenges by increasing the notice requirements if an owner decides to sell their manufactured housing community to allow residents time to make plans to remain, to leave in a dignified manner, or to collectively make an offer to purchase the community. The seller must in good faith consider all competitive offers. If the seller accepts the community's offer, the community could organize as a co-op or other venture. There are examples of successful community-owned manufactured housing co-ops in Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, Missouri, Oregon, and Washington states.

HB 71 expands notice for residents of mobile home communities and provides an opportunity for purchase. It provides an important update to Maryland's laws for manufactured homes, expands transparency, and creates a more informed community.

For all of these reasons, we support HB71 and request a favorable report.

Best,

Jonathan Riedel  
Supervising Attorney  
CASA