



10 Hudson Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Light House
A HOMELESS PREVENTION SUPPORT CENTER

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The Light House

HB1226, Economic Development - Nonprofit Sustainability Fund, Delegate Healey

Position: Favorable

House Appropriations Committee

February 9, 2023

Heather Cassity, Executive Director

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To Whom It May Concern:

As Executive Director of The Light House Homeless Prevention Support Center in Annapolis, I would like to express my support of the Nonprofit Sustainability Fund. In the last few years, The Light House has been met with a dramatic increase in neighbors seeking our services. This is a direct impact from the pandemic, a volatile labor market, and the rising cost of housing and rent.

Recent statistics show that 47% of renters in our county are paying more than the recommended 30% or less of income on housing, putting their finances at risk by not allowing them to save for emergencies, cover their basic needs such as food, healthcare, and utilities, and putting them at risk of not being able to stay in their homes. Inflation and the rising cost of food, transportation, and other essentials has stretched many budgets beyond their limits as well. These factors combined with a major increase in mental health and addiction issues has put significant strain on our community.

Our neighbors who are chronically homeless, newly homeless, or at risk of homelessness need our support more than ever. The individuals and families who experience these hardships are showing up at The Light House every day in record numbers. Prior to 2019, our organization served an average of 2,000 community members in need annually across all our programs. Since the pandemic began in 2020, The Light House has been serving an average of 2,700 community members in need annually.

As a result, our operating expenses increased over 30 percent since the start of the pandemic. Over this past year, the amount of public funding to support COVID relief efforts has diminished, while inflation is causing further increases in our expenses. Market impacts are also affecting our private donors and their ability to make charitable donations. We foresee that our tightest budget will be this year as we continue to do our best to meet this increase in need in our community. Unrestricted grant funding would go a long way in helping The Light House fill this gap and serve our neighbors who need it most.

Sincerely,

Heather Cassity

Executive Director, The Light House Homeless Prevention Support Center