

IHI Testimony for HB 838 Community Development Fund Program Act March 14, 2023

Chairman Barnes, Vice-Chair Craig, and Members of the Appropriations Committee, greetings.

I am Samuel Jordan, Executive Director of the Innovative Housing Institute (IHI). On behalf of our clients and IHI staff, I urge you to submit a favorable report for HB 838.

For seventeen years, IHI has served the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) as the City's Compliance Agent under the terms of the Thompson and Bailey Consent Decrees. The decrees direct Baltimore City to provide housing for one of the most underserved, underrepresented communities in the city, state, and nation: NEDs, the *non-elderly disabled* who are Home Choice Voucher holders aged 62 years and younger.

Over the last eight years, there has been no noteworthy change in our obligations in our contract with HABC. Nor has there been any appreciable increase in the contract price over that same period despite the pandemic, changes in the economy, and the advent of inflation. In other words, we continue to serve the City of Baltimore at a proven level of compassion and competence at the same price for the last eight years.

Our contract with HABC requires us to help NEDs obtain housing from HUD qualified property owners. We provide orientation, counseling, housing selection tours, security deposits, utility hook-ups, familiarity with new neighborhoods, and coaching in how to be good tenants. Following lease-up, we provide six months of supportive services that might also include dispute resolution with property managers and overseeing Reasonable Accommodations as mandated by HUD.

HABC has recently issued an RFP for the next series of year-long contracts that are limited to one-half the cost of our annual level of expenses. *[Despite our experience, documented by the agency and its auditors, we are being asked to submit a proposal that will not defray our expenditures for salaries, fees, insurance, rent, client tours, and licenses. We do not offer paid vacations, family leave, or retirement plans.]*

The RFP means that we are done as the City's Decree Compliance Agents *[although the most accomplished providers of housing assistance for NEDs in the history of the City of Baltimore.]* . Our contract expires April 8, 2023, next month.

Given our circumstances, Chairman Barnes, and Committee Members, you see why we would urge a favorable report of HB 838, and the movement of \$5,000,000 from the Unclaimed Property Fund to the Community Development Fund. *[in hopes that our track record will help us find a new revenue stream for IHI and our Section 8 clients who cannot receive the same high-quality assistance for half the cost that we have expended over the last eight years.]* Thank you.