



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 28, 2023

House Bill 826- Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher - Establishment

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to present **House Bill 826 - Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program - Establishment**, which would provide vouchers and housing assistance payments to low-income families that are currently on a certain federal housing program waitlist.

This legislation seeks to alleviate financial stress from low-income families by establishing a statewide voucher program. Currently, federal vouchers are administered by local public housing agencies or (PHAs). In practice, the PHA pays a housing subsidy directly to the landlord on behalf of the participating family. The family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program. When authorized under certain circumstances by the PHA, a family may use its voucher to purchase a home.

According to a report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, only 10% of families on the waitlist for a federal voucher are eligible to actually receive one, and of that group, 84% have waited more than a year on the waiting list. Federal funding limitations have left hopeful families waiting for multiple years for a chance to receive any form of assistance. On top of this, waitlists in counties such as Prince George's, Baltimore, and Howard county are all closed to new applicants. It is important to highlight the long lasting effects that can come with being on these waiting lists for so long. On average, 60% of households on waiting lists are with children and 18% include at least one person with disabilities. Housing instability can not only cause stress and job insecurity, but also interrupts children's learning.

House Bill 826 grants Maryland families a chance to receive necessary rental assistance and avoid years of waiting on the federal voucher program. I urge the committee to give a **favorable report** for **House Bill 826 - Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program - Establishment**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jheanelle Wilkins'.

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins