



February 24, 2023

Chairman Kumar P. Barve
Environment and Transportation Committee
Taylor House Office Building, Room 251
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee:

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland Inc. has voted to offer **favorable** support for House Bill 826 - Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program – Establishment. **This bill is a 2023 legislative priority of the Black Caucus.**

This legislation aims to establish a Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program in the Department of Housing and Community. This program, in effect, will provide both vouchers and payment assistance to aid low-income families. House Bill 826 will also require that the Department and public housing agencies administer the program.

According to a report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 84% of eligible applicants for federal housing vouchers experience waiting periods extending over one year. Housing insecurity and, inevitably, homelessness happens much more expeditiously. In light of the fact that African Americans experience homelessness at a disproportionate rate, House Bill 826 is a critical piece of legislation that will benefit Black Marylanders and help to reduce this disparity. If passed, Marylanders experiencing hardship will receive aid in a time frame that matches the urgency of their need.

In effect, House Bill 826 will abate housing instability by aiming to provide voucher and payment assistance to Marylanders who need it most, when they need it most. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland supports House Bill 826 and would appreciate your favorable support of this legislation.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland