



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 826

### Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program - Establishment

*Environment and Transportation*

February 28, 2023 1pm

*Submitted by Kali Schumitz and Mark Huffman, Co-Chairs*

#### **Member Agencies:**

211 Maryland

Baltimore Jewish Council

Behavioral Health System Baltimore

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Energy Advocates

Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Family League of Baltimore

Fuel Fund of Maryland

Job Opportunities Task Force

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services,  
Inc.

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Loyola University Maryland

Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Maryland Community Action  
Partnership

Maryland Family Network

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Paul's Place

St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore

Welfare Advocates

#### **Marylanders Against Poverty**

Kali Schumitz, Co-Chair

P: 410-412- 9105 ext 701

E: [kschumitz@mdeconomy.org](mailto:kschumitz@mdeconomy.org)

Mark Huffman, Co-Chair

P: (301) 776-0442 x1033

E: [MHuffman@laureladvocacy.org](mailto:MHuffman@laureladvocacy.org)

**Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports HB 826**, which would provide vouchers and housing assistance payments for low-income families on the waiting list for the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program. Federal Housing vouchers are highly effective at reducing homelessness, housing instability, and racial inequities in housing as well as improving other outcomes for families and children – but there are not enough.

[Millions of households in the US with low-incomes are considered severely cost burdened in relation to the their housing costs – meaning they spend more than 50% of their income on rent and utilities. This includes an estimated 182,000 households in Maryland with 402,000 people and 135,000 children.](#) Many of these are working families. The gap between housing costs and wages is so great that 5.7 million working renter households – nearly one in five – are included in these severely cost burdened numbers. Because of these cost burdens families are forced to make impossible choices between paying the rent and buying other essentials – like food and medicine. As a result of historic and systemic racism these cost burdened low-income renters are disproportionately people of color (71% in MD). They also include large numbers of seniors and people with disabilities – 49,000 seniors and 67,000 people with disabilities in Maryland.

Housing vouchers can right some of these wrongs and restore balance to family budgets by providing rental assistance that covers fair market rent expenses that exceed 30% of a household's income – the widely used standard for the amount a household can spend on housing and still afford other basic necessities. The benefits of this are not just economic. According to [Empath](#) (Economic Mobility Pathways) in Boston, brain science shows that the psychological trauma of eviction and homelessness as well as ongoing housing instability has negative impacts on the functioning of adults and the brain development of children. Children whose families receive vouchers change schools less frequently, are less likely to be in foster care, experience fewer sleep disruptions and behavioral problems, and exhibit positive social behaviors such as offering to help others or treating younger children kindly.

Unfortunately, in spite of the proven benefits and effectiveness of housing vouchers there are not nearly enough. Only one in four households who qualify for a federal housing voucher have one - with waiting lists that can be years long. HB0826 would begin to close that gap in Maryland by providing housing vouchers for families that qualify for a federal voucher but have not received one.

**MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 826.**

*Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.*