

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
February 20, 2024  
**SB 481 – Renters’ Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024**  
**Position:** Support with Amendments

The undersigned individuals and organizations **support with amendments** SB 481. Specifically, we strongly recommend amendments to strike language from SB 481 that would amend the Statewide Voucher Program (HB 826) signed into law in 2023. We have discussed our concerns with the Governor’s Office and understand their intent to submit amendments to remove language amending the Statewide Voucher Program from SB 481. We support the other provisions of the bill without amendment.

As we explained in our testimony last year in support of the Statewide Voucher Bill (HB 826):

People with disabilities are more likely than their non-disabled peers to experience unemployment and poverty,<sup>1</sup> and nationwide, about 4.1 million people with disabilities spend more than half of their income on rent.<sup>2</sup> In Maryland, more than half of all people with disabilities had annual household incomes below \$15,000 in 2016.<sup>3</sup> While many people with disabilities receive monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, SSI payments alone are usually not enough to afford market-rate housing. In 2023, the average monthly rent of a one-bedroom apartment in Maryland was \$1,111, while monthly SSI payments were just \$841.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, many people with disabilities are forced into homelessness, nursing homes, State hospitals, emergency rooms, and Maryland’s jails and prisons.

There is a tremendous need for rental housing assistance across various constituencies and we appreciate the willingness of the Governor’s Office to consider how to respond effectively to these needs, including the disability community.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Drezner, The Freedom Center  
Katie Farinholt, NAMI  
Gail Goodwin, Shared Support Maryland  
Floyd Hartley, Consumer Advocates for Rider Services (CARS)  
Chris Kelter, Accessible Resources for Independence, Inc.  
Ande Kolp, The Arc of Maryland

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<sup>1</sup> Debra L. Brucker et al., *Health and Health Services Access Among Adults with Disabilities Who Receive Federal Housing Assistance*, HOUSING POLICY DEBATE, Aug. 29, 2017, at 1.

<sup>2</sup> About 4.1 million people with disabilities nationwide pay more than half of their income on rent. CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES, UNITED STATES FEDERAL RENTAL ASSISTANCE FACT SHEET (2021), <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/12-10-19hou-factsheet-us.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> MD. DEP’T OF HEALTH, BRFSS BRIEF: DISABILITY AND HEALTH AMONG MARYLAND ADULTS (August 2018), [https://health.maryland.gov/bhm/DHIP/Documents/BRFSS\\_BRIEF\\_2018-08\\_Disability.pdf](https://health.maryland.gov/bhm/DHIP/Documents/BRFSS_BRIEF_2018-08_Disability.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COLLABORATIVE, PRICED OUT: THE HOUSING CRISIS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (2022), <http://www.tacinc.org/knowledge-resources/priced-out-v2/>.

Rachel London, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council  
Shannon Minnick, Independence Now  
Ronza Othman, National Federation of the Blind Maryland  
David Prater, Disability Rights Maryland  
Katie Rouse, On Our Own of Maryland, Inc.  
Mat Rice, People on the Go  
Sandra Sermons, American Council of the Blind of Maryland