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Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Friday, February 14, 2025

HB0896 – Human Relations - Discrimination in Housing - Income-Based Housing Subsidies

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Esteemed Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

My name is Ronnie L. Taylor, and I serve as the Community Advocacy Manager at FreeState Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing legal and systemic inequities affecting Maryland's LGBTQ+ community. I am here to testify in strong support of HB0896, which seeks to prohibit landlords from refusing to rent to prospective tenants who utilize income-based housing subsidies.

HB0896 addresses a critical issue: the discrimination faced by individuals relying on income-based housing subsidies. This form of discrimination disproportionately affects marginalized communities, including low-income families, people of color, and LGBTQ+ individuals. By prohibiting landlords from refusing tenants based on their use of housing subsidies, this bill aims to promote equitable access to housing for all Maryland residents.

The provisions of **HB0896** are straightforward yet impactful. The bill ensures that landlords cannot reject prospective tenants solely because they pay rent with the assistance of an income-based housing subsidy. This measure is vital for several reasons:

1. **Promoting Fair Housing Practices:** By preventing discrimination against subsidy holders, the bill aligns with fair housing principles, ensuring that all individuals have equal access to housing opportunities.
2. **Supporting Vulnerable Populations:** Many individuals who rely on housing subsidies are from vulnerable populations, including those with disabilities, seniors, and low-income families. This bill provides them with necessary protections against housing discrimination.

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3. **Enhancing Community Stability:** By facilitating access to stable housing for subsidy holders, the bill contributes to overall community stability and reduces homelessness rates.

In my role at FreeState Justice, I have encountered numerous LGBTQ+ individuals who have faced housing discrimination due to their reliance on income-based subsidies. This bill represents a significant step toward ensuring that all Marylanders, regardless of their financial circumstances or identities, have access to safe and stable housing.

In closing, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **HB0896**. This legislation not only addresses a critical gap in housing protections but also reinforces Maryland's commitment to equity and inclusion.

Best,

Ronnie L. Taylor

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