



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 896

DATE: February 18, 2025

SPONSOR: Delegate Stewart

ASSIGNED TO: Environment and Transportation Committee

CONTACT PERSON: Leslie Frey

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POSITION: FAVORABLE (Department of Health and Human Services)

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

House Bill 896 prohibits landlords and residential rental properties from refusing to rent to a prospective tenant who pays rent with the assistance of an income-based housing subsidy on the basis of the prospective tenant's income, credit score, lack of credit score, or adverse credit history, except as authorized under federal law. The bill applies to landlords or residential rental properties that use financial information, including credit history, as part of a prospective tenant's rental application. A violation under the bill is a discriminatory housing practice and is subject to enforcement by the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services administers the County's rental assistance and homelessness programs and strongly supports House Bill 896. Landlords often decline to accept housing subsidies from low-income households seeking to exit homelessness. This creates a significant barrier for the approximately 1,400 adults and children currently experiencing homelessness in Montgomery County. It also contributes to a longer experience of homelessness for this population and decreases the availability of shelter because people stay in shelter longer if they cannot find permanent housing that accepts rental subsidies.

House Bill 896 would enable the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights to investigate and enforce the law in cases of suspected discrimination against those utilizing income-based housing subsidies. Because House Bill 896 helps address a barrier for low-income households seeking to exit homelessness, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services respectfully requests that the committee issues a favorable report.