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TESTIMONY ON HB#0896 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Human Relations - Discrimination in Housing - Income-Based Housing Subsidies

TO: Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0896, Human Relations - Discrimination in Housing - Income-Based Housing Subsidies

The State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights deals with Housing Discrimination.¹ The intent of the bill will be to add an additional defined forbidden practice by landlords to the list of things that constitute housing discrimination.

Pursuant to State Government Article, §20-702, Annotated Code of Maryland, it is the policy of the State of Maryland to provide for fair housing throughout the State, to all its citizens, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, source of income, or military status.

Housing discrimination laws make it illegal to:

- Refuse to rent a dwelling to any qualified buyer or renter;
- Use discriminatory terms and conditions in selling or renting;
- Set terms and conditions of home loans in such a way as to discriminate;
- Use discriminatory notices or advertisements indicating a preference or discriminatory limitations;
- Say that a dwelling is not available for inspection, sale, or rent when, in fact, it is available;
- Attempt to steer persons into or away from neighborhoods or apartment complexes due to being members of a protected class;
- Treat a person differently from everyone else because of race, color, disability, familial status (parent or legal custodian with children, pregnant), religion, sex, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or source of income;
- Request information about birth control and/or family planning practices;
- Refuse to consider both applicants' incomes when seeking to buy or rent;
- Commit acts of prejudice, violence, harassment, intimidation, or abuse directed against families or individuals or their residential property.

¹ <https://mccr.maryland.gov/Pages/Housing-Discrimination.aspx>

This bill will provide that a certain landlord may not refuse to rent to a prospective tenant who pays rent with the assistance of an income-based housing subsidy under certain circumstances. It permits that a certain landlord may collect financial information from a prospective tenant under certain circumstances, but it doesn't permit discrimination to occur based on the prospective tenants income source. It will define that a violation of the Act is a discriminatory housing practice and is subject to enforcement by the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0896.

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/06/reduce-plastic-pollution-unep/>

² <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/12/1015296355/zero-waste-single-use-plastic-trash-recycle>