

Robin Truiett-Theodorson  
Chairperson | Board of Commissioners

Janet Abrahams  
President | Chief Executive Officer



February 18, 2025

TO: Members of the Judicial Proceedings

FROM: Janet Abrahams, HABC President & CEO

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "J. Abrahams", written over the printed name.

RE: HB 896 - Human Relations - Discrimination in Housing - Income-Based Housing Subsidies

POSITION: Letter of Support

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of Environment and Transportation Committee, please be advised that the Housing Authority of Baltimore City wishes to submit testimony on HB 896 - Human Relations - Discrimination in Housing - Income-Based Housing Subsidies.

The Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) is the country's 5th largest public housing authority and Baltimore City's largest provider of affordable housing opportunities. HABC serves over 43,000 of Baltimore City's low-income individuals through its Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs. HABC's public housing inventory currently consists of just under 6,000 units located at various developments and scattered sites throughout the city. HABC is federally funded and regulated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

HB 896 - Human Relations - Discrimination in Housing - Income-Based Housing Subsidies proposes that a landlord may not refuse to rent to a prospective tenant who pays rent with the assistance of an income-based housing subsidy. A landlord may not consider or use a credit score or adverse credit history as a part of a rental application. The bill also establishes that a violation of this Act is a discriminatory housing practice and is subject to enforcement by the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights.

HABC serves low- to extremely low-income families and individuals that consist of some of the city's most vulnerable populations, including those at risk of homelessness, the elderly, people with disabilities, veterans, and children to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market through our Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP). HABC's efforts to help individuals and families access affordable housing have served 19,395 households in 2024, marking a 12% increase over the last five years.

HABC has taken several actions over the last few years to ensure more Baltimoreans have access to quality housing through increasing the number of households that receive housing vouchers. These measures have included creating landlord leasing incentives, increasing the number of vouchers for homeless programs, creating a new electronic

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walk-in registration system, and opening the waiting list to help those most in need to find housing through landlords that accept the vouchers.


HABC supports the removal of barriers to tenants when using a housing voucher. When a landlord receives voucher from a Public Housing Authority it provides them with a reliable source of income through consistent, on-time rent payments from the government. PHA's provide preliminary tenant screening prior to processing a voucher. Landlords gain from lower vacancy rates and less tenant turnover, essentially guaranteeing a steady stream of income while also allowing them to provide affordable housing to a wider pool of potential tenants.

In sum, for these reasons HABC requests the passage of HB 896 - Human Relations - Discrimination in Housing - Income-Based Housing Subsidies.

Respectfully submitted:

Janet Abrahams, HABC President & CEO

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