



Bill Title: HB 1239 Fair Housing and Housing Discrimination - Regulations, Intent, and Discriminatory Effect

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Erica Puentes, Progressive Maryland Legislative Coordinator on behalf of Progressive Maryland

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and members of the Committee:

Progressive Maryland supports HB1239 Fair Housing and Housing Discrimination - Regulations, Intent, and Discriminatory Effect. Progressive Maryland is a member based organization led by and focused on working class, Black, and brown communities. Our grassroots advocacy focuses include racial justice and economic justice with the aim of building a more just and equitable Maryland. We have over 125,000 members and supporters across the state, with significant bases in Baltimore City, Prince George's, Montgomery, Frederick, Harford counties, and the Eastern Shore.

In light of this federal administration's civil rights rollbacks, and as threats to federal housing protections loom, Maryland lawmakers must ensure that the state continues to enforce critical federal fair housing protections. If passed, HB1239 will play an essential role in safeguarding equitable access to housing for all Marylanders. It is critical that, as this bill proposes, we codify the federal standard for disparate impact claims into Maryland law. This protection is vital for addressing systemic discrimination in housing. Disparate impact allows legal action against seemingly neutral policies that disproportionately harm protected groups, regardless of intent. It helps combat racial disparities in housing, unfair zoning laws, and discriminatory lending practices. In the absence of strong protections at the federal level, this bill ensures that Marylanders can continue to challenge these discriminatory practices.

Without HB1239, Maryland residents would be vulnerable to a rollback in federal protections, which could leave many without recourse. Progressive Maryland asserts that all residents have the right to live in safe, affordable housing free from discrimination. Our state must take action to ensure that we enforce fair housing standards preventing housing discrimination and promoting inclusive development that encourages racial and economic diversity.

Progressive Maryland urges a favorable report on HB1239 to ensure that every Marylander has access to the housing opportunities they deserve.