

January 31, 2025

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Maryland General Assembly
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support for Senate Bill 367 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Supportive Housing and Health Services

Dear Chair Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

On behalf of Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), I am writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 367 (SB0367), titled "Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Supportive Housing and Health Services." This legislation is a critical step in addressing the dire intersection of housing insecurity and health disparities that disproportionately affect Maryland's Latino and immigrant populations.

Stable housing is a fundamental determinant of health, yet Latino families in Maryland are among the most vulnerable to housing instability. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, 52% of Latino renters in Maryland are cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing. This financial strain forces families to make impossible choices between rent, healthcare, and basic necessities. Lack of stable housing contributes to higher rates of chronic illnesses, untreated mental health conditions, and delayed medical care, exacerbating existing inequities.

The impact of housing insecurity is even more severe for individuals with chronic health conditions, disabilities, and behavioral health needs. A report by the Maryland Department of Health found that Latino residents are 35% more likely to delay or forgo medical care due to financial constraints and lack of access to culturally competent providers. By integrating supportive housing with essential health services, SB 367 provides a pathway to stability for individuals and families facing these challenges.

This legislation would provide crucial assistance with community transition costs, home accessibility modifications, housing and tenancy supports, and wraparound services such as case management, healthcare access, and behavioral support. For immigrant and mixed-status families, who often face additional barriers in navigating the healthcare system, these services can be life-changing. Increased access to supportive housing has been linked to a 40% reduction in emergency room visits and a 50% increase in treatment adherence for chronic conditions, as demonstrated by national supportive housing programs.

Maryland has an opportunity to lead in addressing these disparities by investing in a proven model that promotes housing stability and health equity. Ensuring access to comprehensive, culturally responsive services will allow more individuals to achieve self-sufficiency, improve their well-being, and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

We respectfully urge the members of the Senate Finance Committee to issue a favorable report on SB0367. Passing this legislation will provide a crucial safety net for vulnerable populations, including low-income Latino families, immigrants, and individuals with chronic health conditions, ensuring they have the resources they need to thrive.

Sincerely,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.

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