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Judicial Proceedings Committee

2 East Miller Senate Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Tuesday, February 18, 2025**

**SB0677 – Human Relations – Discrimination in Housing – Income-Based Housing Subsidies**

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Esteemed Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Lauren Pruitt, and I am the Legal Director at FreeState Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving LGBTQ+ Marylanders from diverse backgrounds. I am writing in support of **SB0677**, which seeks to prohibit landlords from refusing to rent to prospective tenants who pay rent with housing assistance.

**SB0677** addresses a critical issue in housing discrimination that impacts economically disadvantaged communities across Maryland. Allowing landlords to refuse to rent to those receiving housing assistance places an overwhelming burden on individuals already struggling to obtain stable housing, pushing them further into a cycle of instability. This practice disproportionately affects the LGBTQ+ community, who are not only more likely than non-LGBTQ+ individuals to experience poverty and homelessness but are also frequently victim to housing discrimination.

Specifically, **SB0677** would:

- **Promote Economic Mobility:** By removing barriers to stable housing, tenants will be able to exercise agency in choosing where they live and can more easily obtain or continue desired jobs, which will benefit the larger economy.
- **Support Access to Education:** In having more agency in where they live, tenants will have greater say in their own education and that of their families.

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- **Advance Social Justice:** Prohibiting landlords from refusing to rent to those receiving housing assistance aligns with efforts to reduce systemic inequities faced by the LGBTQ+ community and other marginalized groups, especially concerning housing discrimination and poverty.

This bill is essential to address and prevent harm to LGBTQ+ individuals. Research indicates that young LGBT adults face nearly twice the risk of homelessness than non-LGBT people due to a variety of factors such as stigma and discrimination (Williams Institute, 2020). LGBTQ+ individuals are also more likely to experience poverty. Data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System revealed that in 2021, 12% of non-LGBT individuals reported living in poverty, compared to 17% of LGBT respondents, with this statistic increasing to 21% for transgender respondents. A study by the Center for American Progress additionally found that 3 in 10 LGBTQ+ adults reported experiencing housing discrimination in 2021-22. Restricting their access to fair and stable housing only exacerbates these statistics.

As an advocate, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges that unfair housing practices impose on LGBTQ+ individuals striving to obtain stable housing. Policies that perpetuate unfair access to housing only serve as obstacles to upward mobility for communities already facing disproportionate rates of poverty, homelessness, and discrimination.

I urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **SB0677**. By prohibiting landlords from refusing to rent to individuals paying rent with housing assistance, Maryland will take a significant step toward dismantling systemic inequities and promoting access to stable housing and upward mobility for vulnerable Marylanders.

Sincerely,

Lauren Pruitt  
Legal Director  
FreeState Justice

**Sources:**

1. LGBT People and Housing Affordability, Discrimination, and Homelessness, <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-housing-instability/>
2. LGBT Poverty in the United States, <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-poverty-us/>
3. Discrimination and Barriers to Well-Being: The State of the LGBTQI+ Community in 2022, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/discrimination-and-barriers-to-well-being-the-state-of-the-lgbtqi-community-in-2022/>