

HB0487
Unhoused Individuals - Rights, Civil Action, and Affirmative Defense
February 12, 2025
Position: Favorable

Esteemed Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Amy Isler. I am a former high school English teacher in Baltimore County Public Schools, mother of two children, and a constituent of Maryland District 44A. **I support HB0487, Unhoused Individuals - Rights, Civil Action, and Affirmative Defense.**

In a case of amazing timing, I've been reading Saidiya Hartman's excellent history, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*. In doing so, I have learned a lot about the inherent white supremacy of many legislative and judicial controls placed on unhoused people. When Reconstruction was tragically cut off in its nascency by the racist President Johnson, many Black people sought respite from southern violence. In the ensuing migration of Black people into the cities of the north, politicians and social engineers sought to control and criminalize Black people, limiting where and how they could live and work. Black men were incarcerated for loitering. Black women and queer people were arrested for prostitution, often without any evidence, simply because they lived outside of a heteronormative family structure. This history of white supremacy is the direct antecedent of systemic violence and criminalization unleashed against unhoused people today.

The thoughtful wording of HB0487 seeks to right some of those historical wrongs by acknowledging the harm done by government agencies in their desire to control and dominate unhoused people. Unhoused folks are at an intersection of marginalization. LGBTQI+ folks, BIPOC folks, disabled folks—all might suffer further oppression because of their unhoused status. This bill seeks to treat all Marylanders with dignity while also mitigating some of the harm done to them in the past.

For these reasons, **I urge a favorable report on HB0487. Thank you.**