



Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
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The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chairman
and Members of the Judiciary Committee
Maryland House of Delegates, Annapolis, Maryland

RE: **HB1164** – Counties and Municipalities – Homelessness – Local Laws (Right to Rest Act) –
UNFAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Clippinger and Committee Members,

The Maryland Federation of Republican Women opposes HB1164 for the following reasons:

The bill provides that counties and municipalities are prohibited from enacting laws that restrict:

- (1) Resting or sleeping in a public space;
- (2) Protecting oneself from the elements in a manner that does not obstruct the use of or access to private property (including storing their private property); or
- (3) Sleeping in a legally parked vehicle.

Local governments are closest to the people and in the best position to make and enforce health and safety decisions regarding activities in their public spaces.

If counties and municipalities cannot set limits on sleeping in public places, the local government cannot fulfill its most important responsibility – the health and safety of its citizens. Vagrancy, theft, littering – all are out of control in cities where this is allowed. Picture Los Angeles or Portland OR. Businesses leave as soon as their leases expire. Tourism declines. Parks, playgrounds, and public plazas become unsafe for children and adults. Marylanders do not want that here.

Simultaneously, the House HGO Committee is considering HB 0093, *Homeless Shelter Certification Program*, that would require all homeless shelters to be State-certified and subject to many new restrictions on their operations. This could negatively impact local church shelters, resulting in many more homeless on the street.

Local governments and citizens are not uncaring about those with economic problems, mental health issues, and addiction; but citizens have a right to demand public safety, and local governments have a responsibility to provide a safe environment that safeguards the health and welfare of its citizens.

Please vote an **UNFAVORABLE** report for **HB1164**.

Sincerely,
Ella Ennis
Legislative Chairman