

Maryland House of Delegates

House Office Building, Room 101

6 Bladen Street

Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Opposition to House Bill 0487 – Unhoused Individuals Rights, Civil Action, Affirmative Defense

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill 0487. While I recognize the need to address the challenges faced by unhoused individuals with compassion and dignity, this bill raises significant concerns regarding public safety, health, and the well-being of both the unhoused population and the broader community.

Homeless encampments pose serious risks to their occupants and surrounding neighborhoods. Overdoses are tragically common in these encampments, often occurring without immediate access to life-saving interventions. Furthermore, sanitation issues—including the lack of clean water, proper waste disposal, and restroom facilities—exacerbate public health risks, leading to unsafe and unsanitary conditions for both those living in encampments and nearby residents. These conditions contribute to environmental degradation and increase the burden on local resources.

Additionally, allowing encampments to persist as a protected right without a clear, structured plan for housing and social services will only perpetuate these unsafe living conditions. Instead, I urge policymakers to focus on proven solutions such as increased investment in emergency shelters, mental health and substance abuse treatment programs, and long-term housing initiatives that provide sustainable and humane alternatives to encampment living.

I ask that the Judiciary Committee reject HB 0487 and instead prioritize comprehensive, effective policies that ensure the safety and well-being of all Maryland residents—both housed and unhoused. I welcome further discussions on collaborative approaches to address homelessness in a way that prioritizes both human dignity and community health.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kate Simms

1630 Lancaster St
Baltimore, MD 21231