



February 10, 2025

HB0487 – Unhoused Individuals –Rights, Civil Action, and Affirmative Defense

Position: **OPPOSE (UNF)**

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Republican Central Committee of Talbot County (RCCTC), I respectfully request that you vote “unfavorable” as your position for HB0487 Unhoused Individuals – Rights, Civil Action, and Affirmative Defense. As a community volunteer and as a person who has been elected to serve in my community, I have heard from a large number of citizens in Talbot County who strongly believe this bill would cause serious harm to the citizens of Talbot County. This bill would have a negative fiscal impact to the community and would be a disservice to the individuals who are unhoused.

As a volunteer, I consistently provide meals for residents at our local shelter and see firsthand the importance of providing a safe shelter, quality food, and a community that surrounds the most vulnerable. The risk of putting people on the street is not the solution to our homeless crises. More wraparound services are what is needed as most long-term unhoused individuals are homeless due to mental health and/or substance abuse.

As someone who serves the community in an elected role, it is my duty to speak on behalf of the citizens within the community who have expressed concerns that allowing unhoused individuals to reside in a public place serves as a health, safety and welfare crisis for all citizens. We need to provide support services, such as housing, transportation, mental health services, financial literacy programs – to do anything less is a disservice to the unhoused individual.

I do not believe, nor am I aware of any law enforcement officer harassing or arresting an unhoused individual. On the contrary, our local law enforcement officers have provided transportation to shelters and rehabilitation centers (even if the center was out of jurisdiction). Our Talbot County Sheriff Gamble, Easton Town Mayor Cook and State Senator, Johnny Mautz all serve on the board of directors for our local Neighborhood Service Center which provides services to those impoverished and lack necessities to thrive. Our elected officials are leading by example and are a great example to the citizens in the community. I am asking if you would **oppose this bill** and allow those who are doing great work to continue to find solutions in fixing localized needs.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lori Stepp". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lori Stepp, Chairwoman RCCTC