



NHCA
Norwood-Holabird
Community Association
Dundalk, MD 21222
DundalkNHCA@gmail.com

 **Norwood Holabird Community Association**

February 11, 2025

ATTN: Delegate(s) Ric Metzgar, Johnny Ray Salling, Robin Grammer, and Bob Long

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 484 / House Bill 487 – Unhoused Individuals: Rights, Civil Action, and Affirmative Defense

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of the Norwood Holabird Community Association, I am sending this letter to express our strong opposition to Senate Bill 484 and House Bill 487, which seek to grant expansive rights and legal protections to individuals engaging in “life-sustaining activities” in public spaces. While we recognize and support the need for humane and effective solutions to homelessness, we believe that this legislation will have severe unintended consequences that negatively impact public safety, community well-being, and local businesses.

For your reference, Norwood Holabird Community Association (NHCA) is predominantly in Baltimore County. But a section of NHCA does straddle the Baltimore City line. We are one of the largest communities in Dundalk, stretching from Dundalk Ave over to Merritt Blvd. In 2023, after 7 months of work, we successfully relocated a very large encampment that took over the corner of Dundalk Ave and Holabird. Since then, we have worked hard to maintain the success of that cleared corner.

Our community remains significantly impacted by several smaller homeless encampments, leading to an increase in crime, public health concerns, and safety hazards. This bill would:

- Remove Local Authority: By prohibiting municipalities from enforcing anti-vagrancy laws and other ordinances, this bill undermines local governments’ ability to address encampments, leaving neighborhoods without effective tools to ensure public order.
- Encourage Permanent Encampments: The legislation allows individuals to engage in activities such as sleeping, storing personal property, and occupying vehicles in public spaces without penalty, increasing the likelihood of entrenched encampments that pose sanitation and security risks.
- Burden Small Businesses and Residents: The presence of long-term encampments near businesses and residential areas has already led to an increase in property damage, littering, and reduced foot traffic. The proposed civil action provisions in the bill could expose local governments and law enforcement agencies to costly litigation, discouraging them from addressing legitimate concerns.

Strain Public Resources: Local governments would face significant financial and operational burdens in providing “adequate alternative indoor spaces” as required under the bill. Many jurisdictions simply do not have the capacity to meet these demands, further exacerbating existing challenges.



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We believe that the solution to homelessness should focus on expanding access to supportive housing, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and job training programs—rather than policies that allow public spaces to be used indefinitely for sheltering and encampments.

For these reasons, we urge you to oppose SB 484 / HB 487 and instead support legislation that balances the needs of unhoused individuals with the rights and safety of the broader community. We welcome the opportunity to discuss constructive approaches to addressing homelessness in a way that benefits all Marylanders.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Suzie Coronel

Norwood Holabird Community Association, President
410-336-2569