



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 226

TO: Chair, House Appropriations Committee

FROM: The Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council

DATE: January 30, 2026

RE: HB 226 – Department of Disabilities – Housing Program and Affiliated Foundations – Establishment

The Core Issue: The Housing Gap

Maryland faces a critical shortage of integrated, accessible, and affordable housing for individuals with disabilities. Current systems often leave this population trapped in congregate settings or facing housing instability due to a lack of specialized oversight and dedicated funding streams.

Why HB 226 is Essential

This bill moves beyond "status quo" advocacy by establishing a formal infrastructure for disability-specific housing development:

- **Centralized Expertise:** Creates a dedicated Housing Program within the Department of Disabilities to streamline navigation and resource allocation.
- **Private-Public Synergy:** Authorizes Affiliated Foundations, allowing the Department to leverage private investment and philanthropic grants that are currently inaccessible through state budgets alone.
- **Economic Efficiency:** Stable housing reduces state expenditures on emergency services, institutionalization, and crisis management.

The Impact

HB 226 transforms housing from a "service" into a right. By fostering foundations specifically tasked with disability housing, Maryland can bypass traditional bureaucratic bottlenecks and accelerate the construction of universally designed homes.

"Housing is the foundation of independence. Without a stable place to live, all other state-funded disability services—from employment support to healthcare—are significantly less effective."

Conclusion

HB 226 provides the structural "teeth" necessary to solve Maryland's disability housing crisis. It is a proactive, fiscally responsible approach to ensuring all citizens live with dignity in the community.

We strongly urge a FAVORABLE report on HB 226.