



February 3, 2026

Economic Matters Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian, and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of Interfaith Works, we are submitting this testimony in favor of HB0315 – Human Relations – Discrimination in Housing – Income-Based Housing Subsidies. This bill is a win-win for the State and County in reducing the unnecessary expense of people staying in shelter longer than necessary, and for landlords who receive guaranteed rent from tenants who are highly motivated to stay housed.

For the past 53 years, Interfaith Works has been serving Montgomery County residents experiencing homelessness and poverty. This includes working with 3,000 people a year who are living on the streets, staying in one of our four shelters, or living throughout the County with financial assistance and the ongoing support of our dedicated case managers.

Moving people from homelessness to the safety and security of a home is a critical issue for the County. Despite being one of the wealthiest counties in the country, homelessness has risen 34% in the past year, which includes an 80% increase in families. Indeed, **nearly 1 in 5 Marylanders experiencing homelessness right now are in Montgomery County.**

In 2020, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) Act which prohibited landlords from denying leases to people with housing vouchers. As you know, vouchers pay for a substantial portion of the rent with the balance paid by the tenant in an amount the government has pre-certified that the tenant can pay. While the HOME Act seemed like an iron-clad solution, many landlords found a loophole: credit scores and minimum income requirements. Credit scores are applied to the tenant's entire credit history, including the period in which they struggled to pay bills before receiving the voucher and other assistance. In addition, some landlords apply minimum income requirements based on the entire rent owed, instead of on the portion the tenant personally must pay.

Closing this loophole would enable eligible people to move into safe and secure housing more quickly. Furthermore, we believe **HB0315 is a win-win for property owners and governments:**

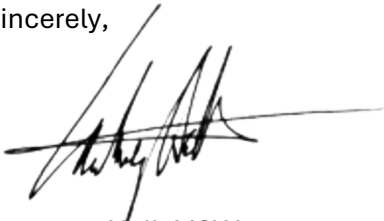
1. **“Rent eats first when it comes to paying bills.”** Like our colleagues at the Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership who coined this phrase, our clients are also highly motivated to stay housed and will pay their portion of rent first before addressing other bills. In fact, over the past two years, less than 5% of our clients have struggled with rent payments. This is significantly below the national average of the 10-13% of renters overall who struggle with rent payments. Due to their connection to assistance programs, voucher holders who do experience arrears are more likely to be identified early and addressed through payment plans, emergency assistance, or adjustments before escalation.

2. **Landlords gain a guaranteed source of income.** We recognize the fiduciary responsibility landlords and property managers have to keep apartments filled with renters who are paying on time. The use of credit scores is irrelevant and a waste of the landlord's time because it ignores the fact that a large portion of the rent is guaranteed and paid directly by the government. The balance of the rent to be paid by the tenant has been pre-determined by the government before issuing the voucher, based on the client's available income. At a time when evictions in Montgomery County have increased 436% over the past five years – with 80-90% due to failure-to-pay rent – having dependable rental income helps property owners' bottom line and reduces the costs of apartment turnover.

3. **Closing the loophole saves money for the state and counties.** The denial of vouchers is causing a back-up in the shelters. Because people are staying longer than necessary in shelters, beds are not being freed up for people who are living on the streets, which is unsafe for them and raises concerns from citizens and local businesses. Furthermore, moving people into stable housing saves money on other public services including jails, hospitalizations, and emergency departments. Altogether, moving people from emergency shelter to supportive housing saves governments an average of 49.5% or \$4,800 per person each year.

With 53 years of experience in supporting Montgomery County residents, we respectfully urge the Economic Matters Committee to pass HB0315, ensuring that eligible Marylanders can move quickly from homelessness into safe, stable homes. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Courtney Hall, MSW
CEO
Interfaith Works



Liz Krueger, MSW, MPH, LCSW-C
Director of Homeless Services
Interfaith Works