



# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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**HB 315**

**DATE: February 5, 2025**

**SPONSOR: Delegate Stewart**

**ASSIGNED TO: Economic Matters**

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**POSITION: FAVORABLE (Department of Housing and Community Affairs)**

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### **Human Relations - Discrimination in Housing - Income-Based Housing Subsidies**

House Bill 315 expands the State's protections against discrimination in housing by prohibiting landlords from refusing to lease a unit to a tenant based on income or credit score for those tenants who receive income-based housing subsidy. Income-based housing subsidies are defined as recurring monetary assistance to a landlord from a governmental entity or nonprofit organization intended to defray, in whole or in part, a rent obligation. This includes Federal Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. House Bill 315 codifies such refusal as a "discriminatory housing practice" under State law, subject to enforcement by the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights.

The protections offered bill House Bill 315 are premised on the idea that housing subsidies ensure that a tenant has a stable way to pay for housing, so discrimination based on source of income serves no legitimate business purpose for the landlord and instead is a civil rights issue. The bill not only bans housing discrimination based on source of income but also based on amount of income and credit score (or lack of credit score) for those individuals who receive housing subsidies. This is intended to address a practice that is currently legal under State law but nonetheless can result in unfair discrimination against housing subsidy recipients. People experiencing homelessness and housing instability, especially Black and Latino households, are disproportionately reliant on income-based housing subsidies due to systemic income inequality, credit discrimination, and prior evictions tied to poverty rather than risk. Some landlords screen out voucher holders using minimum income ratios, credit score thresholds, or past credit issues unrelated to their current ability to pay rent once a subsidy is in place. These practices perpetuate voucher discrimination, delay lease-ups, and extend homelessness despite available assistance. House Bill 315 closes this avenue for discrimination.

The Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 315.