



## HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY

### FAVORABLE

#### HB 1501 – Department of Housing and Community Development – Homeless Shelter Certification

House Economic Matters Committee  
March 12, 2026

Health Care for the Homeless supports HB 1501, which would build a framework for homeless shelter certification through Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). This bill is based on recommendations from DHCD’s Maryland Homeless Shelter Certification Recommendations Report (“the Report”) from January of 2025.<sup>1</sup> In relevant part, the Report recommended a shelter certification process, which included four (4) specified implementation recommendations:

- 1) Shelter Certification Levels
- 2) Implementation Timeline
- 3) Certification and Renewal Process
- 4) Compliance Monitoring

Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland’s leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We deliver medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, housing support services, and housing for over 11,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. Many of our clients have reported unsafe, unhealthy or even deadly conditions in shelters. For this reason, clients have told us that they would rather sleep outside than in the shelter. It is clear we need to develop oversight and accountability for shelter conditions.

DHCD’s January 2025 Report provided abundant reasons for why Maryland needs a State Homeless Shelter Certification System. Among other things, the Report noted that “[w]hile there are relatively robust regulations and monitoring requirements homeless shelters must follow if they receive federal or state funds, there are significant gaps in oversight and policy.” The gaps DHCD referenced included that there are no state or local laws in Maryland that codify homeless shelter operating or habitability standards; other than federal homeless program laws and HUD regulations, the local Continuums of Care (CoCs) have significant discretion as to local standards they choose to adopt or enforce; and a CoC’s ability to require habitability standards is limited to HUD or DHCD-funded homeless programs, no other homeless shelter programs or non-HUD federal homeless programs.

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<sup>1</sup> DHCD Report available at [https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/DHCD/SB1107Ch152\(2024\)HB577Ch151\(2024\)\\_2025\(1\).pdf](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/DHCD/SB1107Ch152(2024)HB577Ch151(2024)_2025(1).pdf).

Beyond the abundance of evidence that shelter conditions are uninhabitable in many cases, the need for uniformity and minimum standards throughout the state is apparent. Maryland's lack of uniform standards or oversight of emergency shelters harms unhoused community members and undermines the State's systemic response to homelessness. For the safety of our clients, we urge a favorable report.

*Our Vision: Everyone is healthy and has a safe home in a just and respectful community.*

*Our Mission: We work to end homelessness through racially equitable health care, housing and advocacy in partnership with those of us who have experienced it.*

*For more information, visit [www.hchmd.org](http://www.hchmd.org).*