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HB0573

February 19, 2026

TO: Members of the House Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 573 – Fair Housing and Housing Discrimination - Regulations, Intent, and Discriminatory Effect

POSITION: Support

Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 573 – Fair Housing and Housing Discrimination - Regulations, Intent, and Discriminatory Effect.

HB 573 alters Article – State Government, § 20-101 of the Annotated Code of Maryland to provide for additional protections of residents against housing discrimination, meaningfully bolstering the Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) fair housing efforts. Under the language of the legislation, housing discrimination would not only constitute discriminatory practices, but any act that has a discriminatory impact regardless of intent. The bill also expands DHCD's role in clarifying and enforcing fair housing regulations.

According to the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights' (MCCR) annual reports from 2021-2025, the MCCR received 959 complaints of housing discrimination in those five years. Of those complaints, the overwhelming majority were based on disability; the number of housing discrimination cases also doubled from 2022 to 2024. HB 573 would allow for an additional avenue for affected residents to prove their complaints of housing discrimination, and by doing so, bolster MCCR and DHCD's work in deterring future housing discrimination while improving access to housing for the members of Maryland's communities who are most at-risk for housing insecurity. Traditionally, fair housing complainants need to prove the *intent* of the act, which results in inequitable outcomes in the acquisition, maintenance, or loss of housing; instead, HB 573 would lower the burden of proof to that of disparate *impact* on an individual of a protected class. From this, it can be reasonably assumed that housing providers will take extra care to ensure they are not discriminating against prospective renters and buyers, either intentionally or unintentionally. This is particularly important to Baltimore City as, according to MCCR's reports, 206 (21.48%) of housing discrimination cases originated from Baltimore City from 2021 to 2025.

For the above-stated reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on House Bill 573.