



TESTIMONY FOR SB0274

Fair Housing and Housing Discrimination – Regulations, Intent, and Discriminatory Effect

Bill Sponsor: Senator Sydnor
Committee: Economic Matters
Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition
Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair
Position: **FAVORABLE**

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0274 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Being able to afford a house is a dream that most people have. Buying a house is often the first step towards real financial independence. However, housing discrimination is very real, and sometimes Marylanders are not able to buy a home because of that discrimination. There are plenty of laws on the books for issues related to discrimination in Maryland. We are generally a very caring and accepting society. But the flaw is usually intention. People who discriminate say that they didn't 'intend' to discriminate, and it's really hard to enforce laws in these cases.

This bill, if enacted, would prohibit such discrimination in housing regardless of intent. There is only one exception:

- the action was without discriminatory intent;
- the action was necessary to achieve one or more substantial, legitimate, and nondiscriminatory interests; and
- the person could not have achieved the substantial, legitimate, and nondiscriminatory interests by less discriminatory means.

This is a very small window, and would require the person discriminating to prove that their discrimination fit into that small exception. Otherwise, discrimination that even if unintentional and non-explicit but has a discriminatory effect, will not be legal.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

