



## **TESTIMONY FOR HB1353 – Homeless Individuals – Fee and Examination Exemptions – FAVORABLE**

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegates Fair, Behler, Bouchat, Crutchfield, Ebersole, Embry, Hornberger, A. Johnson, Kerr, Martinez, Palakovich Carr, Pasteur, Pruski, Qi, Ruth, Simmons, Simpson, Solomon, Spiegel, Stein, Stewart, and Ziegler

**Committee:** Environment and Transportation / Health

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Jessica Gorski, Executive Committee

**Position:** FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

**My name is Jessica Gorski, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB1353 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition.** We are a statewide coalition of grassroots organizations representing more than 30,000 Marylanders across every legislative district. Our mission is rooted in the belief that government must protect people’s lives, health, and dignity, especially those experiencing homelessness, who face some of the most significant structural barriers to stability, safety, and well-being.

HB1353 removes several of those barriers by eliminating unnecessary fees and administrative hurdles that prevent homeless Marylanders from accessing essential documents, transportation, and opportunities.

**This bill prohibits the Maryland Department of Health from collecting a fee for a copy of a vital record issued to a homeless individual.** It exempts vehicles owned by homeless individuals from registration fees. It adjusts the waiting period for unaccompanied homeless youth with a learner’s permit to take examinations for a provisional driver’s license. **These changes recognize that identification documents and mobility are not optional conveniences; they are foundational to securing employment, housing, education, and safety.**

They are also foundational to **accessing healthcare.**

For individuals experiencing homelessness, the inability to obtain a birth certificate or other vital record can directly block access to medical care. Without

identification, people cannot enroll in Medicaid, apply for insurance, fill prescriptions, access specialty care, or even receive certain medical services. **Something as basic as replacing a lost ID or vital record can determine whether a person receives treatment or goes without it.**

These protections are urgently needed.

- **Vital records are often required for insurance enrollment**, including Medicaid, which is the primary source of healthcare coverage for many homeless individuals.
- **Lack of identification can delay or prevent access to medications**, follow-up care, and referrals.
- **Transportation barriers compound health inequities**, especially for individuals managing chronic conditions, behavioral health needs, or recovery from substance use disorders.
- **Unaccompanied homeless youth face unique healthcare challenges**, and the ability to obtain a driver's license sooner can dramatically improve their access to medical appointments, school-based services, and supportive programs.

HB1353 removes these barriers with a balanced, compassionate approach. It ensures:

- **Access to vital records**, enabling individuals to obtain healthcare coverage and medical services.
- **Fee exemptions for vehicle registration**, supporting mobility for medical appointments, treatment programs, and emergency needs.
- **Reduced waiting periods for unaccompanied homeless youth**, helping them access healthcare and stability sooner.
- **A consistent statewide standard**, ensuring that no Marylander is denied opportunity or care because of their housing status.

This bill aligns squarely with the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. It promotes equity, supports pathways out of homelessness, and ensures that Maryland's laws do not impose financial penalties on those who can least afford them. **No one should be denied access to healthcare, transportation, or basic documents simply because they are experiencing homelessness.**

We respectfully urge a **FAVORABLE** report on HB1353.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jessica Gorski  
Executive Committee  
Maryland Legislative Coalition