



HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY
FAVORABLE

HB 1353 – Homeless Individuals – Fee and Examination Exemptions

House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Health Committee

March 5, 2026

Health Care for the Homeless supports HB 1353, which would exempt people experiencing homelessness from certain administrative fees and processes that would otherwise cause insurmountable barriers to certain services. Among other things, the bill would:

- Prohibit the Maryland Department of Health from collecting a fee for certain copies of vital records issued to people experiencing homelessness;
- Establish that a vehicle owned by an individual experiencing homelessness is exempt from vehicle registration fees;
- Prohibit the Motor Vehicle Administration from imposing certain driver's license fees if the licensee or applicant is experiencing homelessness; and
- Exempting homeless individuals from certain mandatory vehicle emissions inspections.

As a Federally Qualified Health Center serving over 11,000 of Maryland's most vulnerable individuals each year, we know that fees and meeting administrative requirements can be insurmountable for people experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness creates new health problems and exacerbates existing ones. Where someone with stable housing could easily manage a condition like diabetes, trying to manage diabetes in a shelters or on the street is virtually impossible – with no place to store their insulin and syringes, no consistent way to eat healthy when you don't know where or when you'll get your next meal, an otherwise manageable disease becomes unmanageable and sometimes fatal. Those of us without stable housing are:

- 3-4x more likely to die prematurely
- 2x as likely to have a heart attack or stroke
- 3x more likely to die of heart disease if they are between 25 and 44 years old

Unsurprisingly, individuals experiencing homelessness disproportionately exhibit the risk factors for hypertension: race, smoking, obesity, lack of exercise and lack of access to healthy food options. Living with a chronic disease or illness that requires a strict regimen to manage, such as the treatment of HIV/AIDS or Hepatitis C, it is difficult to stick to complex medicine regimens without access to stable housing, clean water, bathrooms, refrigeration and food. Children experiencing homelessness have a high rate of asthma and related respiratory challenges, which interfere with schooling and other important life and developmental events.

The experience of homelessness makes all other aspects of a person's life exponentially harder. Even one bill can be the difference between making a person's rent or being out on the street. For people experiencing homelessness, lack of secure and stable shelter, food, income, transportation, hygiene and physical and behavioral health care means needing to navigate complex systems across multiple agencies. While paying even minimal fees or going in for emission inspections might be something a stably housed Marylander can easily accomplish, it can be extremely difficult for people experiencing homelessness who already have to navigate many more administrative barriers than their housed counterparts. Streamlining processes or eliminating fees break down the barriers in those systems offers relief that would otherwise make collecting vital records or legally drive unattainable.

We urge a favorable report.

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.

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.