

# **HB1353\_Homeless\_Individuals\_Fee\_and\_Examination\_Ex**

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



## **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

**HB1353\_DHCD\_SUPPORT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Danielle Meister

Position: FAV

**DATE:** March 5, 2026  
**BILL NO.:** House Bill 1353  
**TITLE:** Homeless Individuals - Fee and Examination Exemptions  
**COMMITTEE:** House Environment & Transportation Committee

### Letter of Support

#### Description of Bill:

House Bill 1353 would reduce financial and legal barriers for homeless individuals to obtain employment, housing, public benefits, health care, and higher education by increasing access to identification documents and transportation. The bill has 4 key components:

1. Expands the types of vital records a homeless individual can obtain for free beyond just a birth certificate allowed under current state law, to now include copies of certificates or reports of death, fetal death, marriage, divorce, dissolution or annulment of marriage, adoption, or adjudication of paternity;
2. Eliminates vehicle registration fees and exempts inspections under certain conditions for vehicles owned and personally used by homeless individuals;
3. Eliminates initial drivers licensing fees for unaccompanied homeless youth; and
4. Reduces the length of time unaccompanied homeless youth under 19 must hold their learners permit before obtaining a provisional license from 9 months to 3 months

#### Background and Analysis:

Lack of identification and limited transportation are major, compounding barriers to securing stable housing and employment, particularly for low-income individuals and those experiencing homelessness. Without an ID, people cannot complete job applications, sign leases, opening bank account, enrolling in workforce programs or school, or accessing public benefits.<sup>1</sup> For people experiencing homelessness, obtaining ID is particularly challenging because of a lack of permanent address, documents lost to frequent moves or living in an unsheltered location, fees for duplicate copies, or being stuck in the “need an ID to get ID” loop.<sup>2</sup> Acquiring a birth certificate or social security card often requires a photo ID, yet obtaining a photo ID requires those documents.<sup>3</sup>

These challenges are even more profound for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. Maryland DHCD’s 2022 YouthREACH survey of homeless youth found:

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<sup>1</sup> Movement Advancement Project. <https://www.mapresearch.org/file/ID-info-homelessness.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Government Accountability Office. HOMELESSNESS: Barriers to Obtaining ID and Assistance Provided to Help Gain Access. GAO-24-105435. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/d24105435.pdf>. (2024)

<sup>3</sup> Sanders C, Burnett K, Lam S, Hassan M, Skinner K. "You Need ID to Get ID": A Scoping Review of Personal Identification as a Barrier to and Facilitator of the Social Determinants of Health in North America. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2020 Jun 13;17(12):4227. doi: 10.3390/ijerph17124227. PMID: 32545798; PMCID: PMC7345293.

- 23% of youth cited lack of necessary documents as the primary barrier to accessing housing and employment assistance
- 14% reported trying to access identity documents within the last year and 18% reported needing assistance accessing identity documents
- 16% reported being enrolled in SNAP while 50% indicated they tried to enroll in SNAP in the last year and were denied

Similarly, poor transportation options restrict access to jobs and affordable housing – particularly in rural communities. Affordable housing is often located far from job centers, leading to long, expensive commutes, or in areas with poor transit access. In these communities, access to a car is essential for securing and maintaining employment, school, and engaging in workforce development programs.

Data collected by DHCD from Maryland Continuums of Care demonstrates significant gaps in employment and access to public benefits. To maximize permanent housing and employment outcomes while reducing length of time homeless, we must continue to rapidly reduce barriers for households experiencing a housing crisis – such as lack of ID or transportation. In FY25, 54% of adults who experienced homelessness in Maryland had zero cash income at entry into a homeless shelter or street outreach program. Only 31% reported they were receiving SNAP benefits and only 78% reported having health insurance.

This bill would significantly reduce barriers for both adults and unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness, enabling them to obtain ID faster and begin applying for jobs and housing as soon as possible after a housing crisis. It would also enable homeless individuals with access to reliable public transit to maintain or secure a vehicle at reduced cost, increasing their ability to travel to work or school and expand their housing options.

**DHCD Position:**

The Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on House Bill 1353.



# **Health Care for the Homeless - HB 1353 FAV - homel**

Uploaded by: Joanna Diamond

Position: FAV



**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](http://www.hchmd.org).

# **Del Fair HB 1353 Sponsor Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kris Fair

Position: FAV

**KRIS FAIR**  
*Legislative District 3*  
Frederick County

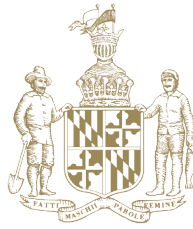
Government, Labor, and  
Elections Committee

*Subcommittees*

Chair, Election Law

Local Government/Bi-County  
Agencies and Administration

Chair, Maryland Legislative  
LGBTQ+ Caucus



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**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

Honorable Marc Korman, Chair  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
250 Lowe House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**March 5, 2026**

**HB1353- Homeless Individuals - Fee and Examination Exemptions**

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

Homeless individuals face too many barriers that keep them unhoused and unsupported. The state has a responsibility to ease burdens for homeless individuals by removing fees for essential documentation for work, healthcare, and housing -- especially when we already grant these fee waivers for other groups.

Requiring homeless individuals to pay for these documents when they often cannot afford them creates an unnecessary roadblock towards employment, housing, and medical care that the state could alleviate today with minimal fiscal impact. Access to vital documents and licenses will undoubtedly help these individuals get back on their feet as they struggle with homelessness and its impacts.

The list of vital documents this bill proposes to make free for homeless individuals is based off an existing list of exemptions of these fees for veterans and veteran families, with a few additions and reductions of waiting periods based on suggestions from advocates that will disproportionately help homeless youth.<sup>1</sup>

We have a sponsor amendment that incorporates additional feedback from advocates, changing certain definitions and striking the word "unaccompanied" from a few places so that the bill does not unnecessarily exclude individuals that need this waiver.

Homeless Marylanders should not have to choose between paying for food, bills, and documentation. HB 1353 is a simple concept that will have an outsized impact on individuals who already face too many obstacles. I urge the Committee to return a favorable report to facilitate easier access to health care, housing, and employment by lifting financial burdens for obtaining vital documentation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kris Fair".

Delegate Kris Fair, District 3, Frederick County

<sup>1</sup> Vehicle registration fees, learner's instructional permits, driver's license fees, emissions inspections, birth/death/marriage/divorce/adoption and similar certificates.

**Testimony\_SHIP\_HB1353.pdf**

Uploaded by: Melissa Muntz

Position: FAV

Bill Number: HB1353

FAV

Melissa Muntz, Executive Director

Student Homelessness Initiative Partnership (SHIP) of Frederick County

[Melissa@shipfrederick.com](mailto:Melissa@shipfrederick.com), 240-415-8971, 21701

Since 2022, SHIP of Frederick County has assisted 182 students in obtaining a Maryland drivers license. SHIP provided comprehensive case management through the process exclusively to students experiencing homelessness. The majority of those students have been between the ages of 16 and 18.

Approximately 90% of those students lack a parent or guardian with both a valid driver's license and a vehicle. As a result, students are obtaining the required practice hours entirely through a driving school (not with a parent).

Currently, people who begin the permitting process before age 19 are required to wait 9 months before testing for their drivers license (those age 19 or older wait only 3 months). We understand that the intent is for these young people to spend that time practicing with a parent. SHIP's students are completing their driver education class and all necessary practice hours through the driving school in far less time than 9 months. Since they have no access to an adult with a vehicle to practice with, they are spending 4-6 months waiting to take their licensing test while obtaining no additional practice time behind the wheel. SHIP is actually seeing students lose driving skills in this time, rather than improve as the waiting period intends.

Youth experiencing homelessness play a crucial role in earning income for themselves and their families. Youth who do not graduate from high school are more than 3.5 times more likely to experience homelessness as adults. SHIP's goal is to keep youth connected to education while they earn necessary income in order to reduce their likelihood of experiencing homelessness as adults. The ability to drive immediately increases a young person's earning potential as well as their ability to reliably attend school.

The capacity of a young person experiencing homelessness is incredibly dependent on their access to transportation. Access to services such as clinic based healthcare, mental health and crisis care, food pantries, and career readiness programs all require the ability to attend in person. Apprenticeship, internship, and work study programs sponsored by the public school system all require transportation. Students without access to a vehicle are often ruled out of these programs before they are able to apply. Community college classes pose the same barrier for many. Even affordable housing outside of a city center becomes a viable option with appropriate transportation.

Reducing the wait time for youth experiencing homelessness from 9 months to 3 months will provide more equitable access to a variety of opportunities for these young people. The long term impact of this change will keep more youth connected to education, reducing the amount of adults who experience homelessness years from now. I urge you to consider making this change to allow the young people SHIP serves to thrive in our state.

**Maryland Catholic Conference\_FAVHB1353\_.pdf**

Uploaded by: Michelle Zelaya

Position: FAV



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

March 5<sup>th</sup> 2026

**HB1353**

**Homeless Individuals - Fee and Examination Exemptions  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 1353**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

**House Bill 1353** removes unnecessary financial and administrative barriers faced by individuals experiencing homelessness. This bill prohibits the Maryland Department of Health from collecting fees for vital records for homeless individuals, exempts vehicles owned by homeless individuals from registration fees, and adjusts the waiting period for unaccompanied homeless youth to obtain a provisional driver's license. At its core, the intent of this bill is simple yet profound: to ensure that those who are already facing immense hardship are not further held back by costs or bureaucratic delays as they work to rebuild their lives.

For individuals, access to a birth certificate, identification, or the ability to lawfully operate a vehicle is often the first step toward securing employment, housing, medical care, and education. For youth navigating homelessness without parental support, the ability to obtain a driver's license sooner can determine whether they can get to school, maintain a job, or reach a safe place at night. For communities, supporting pathways out of homelessness strengthens public safety, enhances neighborhood stability, and reduces long-term reliance on emergency services. For the state, easing these burdens promotes economic mobility and reflects a compassionate and fiscally sound approach to addressing homelessness.

Catholic social teaching reminds us that every person is endowed with inherent worth and must be supported in their efforts to achieve stability, security, and the opportunity to flourish. Removing financial barriers to essential documents is not simply an administrative change, it is an affirmation that no one should be denied the basic tools needed to survive and thrive. By lifting unnecessary burdens from our most vulnerable neighbors, we act with compassion, justice, and solidarity.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 1353**.

# **Testimony in support of HB1353 - Homeless Individu**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703

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**TESTIMONY ON HB#1353- POSITION: FAVORABLE**

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**Homeless Individuals - Fee and Examination Exemptions**

**TO:** Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#1353, Homeless Individuals - Fee and Examination Exemptions**

Based on 2025–2026 data, the intersection of government fees, funding cuts, and punitive policies in Maryland is expected to significantly increase the homeless population, with estimates suggesting a **25% surge** in homelessness across the state. The primary drivers are ... local policies that impose costs on unhoused individuals, trapping them in cycles of poverty. <sup>1</sup>

Local governments in Maryland often impose fees, fines, and costs that disproportionately affect unhoused individuals, making it harder to escape homelessness. This includes barriers to increased participation in activities that can help a person move from homelessness. Among these policies are:

- a copy of a vital record issued to a homeless individual
- vehicle registration fees
- altering the period of time after which an unaccompanied homeless youth who holds a learner's instructional permit and is under a certain age may take certain examinations for a provisional driver's license; etc
- Fines for Survival
- Towing Fees

This bill will prohibit the Maryland Department of Health from collecting a fee for a copy of a vital record issued to a homeless individual; establishing that a vehicle owned by a homeless individual is exempt from vehicle registration fees; altering the period of time after which an unaccompanied homeless youth who holds a learner's instructional permit and is under a certain age may take certain examinations for a provisional driver's license; etc.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#1353.**

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<sup>1</sup> Google AI Search “effects of government fees on homeless population in Maryland”