



January 23, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chairman  
and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Senate of Maryland, Annapolis, Maryland

RE: **SB0049** – Unhoused Individuals – Affirmative Defense – **UNFAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members,

The Maryland Federation of Republican Women opposes SB 0049 for the following reasons:

- This bill will prohibit counties and municipalities from enacting laws that restrict or impose penalties for unhoused individuals carrying out life sustaining activities where the jurisdiction does not provide unlimited free alternative housing and services [“life–sustaining activity” defined as moving, resting, sitting, standing, lying down, sleeping (including sleeping in one’s vehicle), eating, drinking, or protecting oneself and family or one’s property from the elements].
- “Public place” is broadly defined and would allow an unhoused individual to camp out on public sidewalks adjacent to private homes, businesses, and schools.
- Removing the ability of local governments to set limits on sleeping in public places will negatively impact the safety of their citizens. Parks, playgrounds, and public plazas will become increasingly unsanitary and unsafe for children and adults (picture Los Angeles and Portland OR). This is totally unacceptable.

Local governments use a good portion of their budgets to provide services to these individuals. Citizens’ tax payments fund those efforts. Citizens also volunteer their time and make charitable contributions to assist individuals facing economic difficulties, mental health issues, and addiction.

But local governments have a responsibility to maintain public safety for the community at large. They are closest to the people and in the best position to make and enforce health and safety standards regarding activities in their public spaces.

Please vote an **UNFAVORABLE** report for **SB0049**.

Sincerely,

Ella Ennis  
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