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Committees

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Testimony

SB 49: Unhoused Individuals – Rights, Civil Action, and Affirmative Defense

Good afternoon, Chairman Smith, Vice Chair and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee.

Senate Bill 49 recognizes the dignity and basic rights of unhoused individuals in Maryland. By affirming their right to engage in life-sustaining activities in public spaces, this bill ensures that homelessness is **not** criminalized. It also creates legal protections to prevent unfair penalties and provides an affirmative defense in cases of trespassing or disturbing the peace.

Criminalizing homelessness does not address the root causes and only perpetuates hardship. By offering these protections, Maryland would join other states like California and Oregon, which have passed similar laws ensuring that people without homes are not unfairly penalized for merely trying to survive. SB 49 is an important step toward a more compassionate and just society... and practical solutions for homelessness.

Therefore, I respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report SB 49.