



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov
FAX 410-313-3051

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Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of Senate Bill 335** – Human Relations – Discrimination in Housing – Income Based Housing Subsidies

Chair Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

I write to express my strong support for Senate Bill 335, which would represent a critical step in preventing discrimination in housing based upon income-based housing subsidies. While Howard County is ranked as the sixth richest County in the nation, we continue to experience a housing affordability crisis, compounded by a shortage of affordable housing units. According to the 2024 Rental Housing Survey for Howard County, the county has an estimated shortage of at least 6,100 affordable housing units for households earning under \$60,000 annually. This shortage reflects similar trends across the region, a crisis that has far-reaching implications for Maryland's long-term economic stability.

One of the most important actions we can take to address that crisis and ensure equitable housing affordability is to allow tenants flexibility in the ways they can pay their rent. SB335 would provide relief to prospective tenants in the following ways:

- Combat discrimination by instituting specific and intentional legal protections for prospective tenants utilizing income-based housing subsidies.
- Improve the availability, accessibility, affordability, and diversity of housing opportunities for prospective tenants utilizing income-based housing subsidies.
- Provide needed clarification and expansion on legal definitions for income-based housing subsidies, adverse credit history, etc. for landlords, tenants, and fair housing practice agencies.
- Address economic disparities which contribute to displacement and out-of-state migration, preventing loss of residents, workforce, and critical revenue needed to fund public services in the State of Maryland.

SB335 is one critical and timely step toward addressing the housing affordability crisis for struggling Marylanders. I urge a **favorable report** for this important legislation to make housing more affordable for all.

Respectfully,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive