



January 30, 2026  
Housing Our Neighbors  
Baltimore City, 21201

**TESTIMONY ON HB 0104 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**  
**Unhoused Individuals – Rights and Affirmative Defense**

**TO:** Chairperson J. Sandy Bartlett, Vice Chair Debra Davis and members of the Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Housing Our Neighbors

Our names are Mark Council and James Crawford. We are residents of Baltimore City and are the lead organizers and co-founders of Housing Our Neighbors, a collective of community members and activists who advocate to end homelessness in Baltimore City. We are submitting this testimony in support of HB104 which will protect the rights of unhoused people to engage in life-sustaining activities.

Housing Our Neighbors' goal is to ensure accessible, quality housing for all community members. We believe that housing is a human right. Housing provides security, dignity, and well-being. People should not be punished simply because they do not have access to stable housing.

**Many of our members live or have experienced the scenarios that this bill seeks to address.** HON Outreach Team members speak with residents who are unhoused each month, and continuously hear stories of mistreatment within and outside of homeless shelters, including of people being forced to relocate without notice, their belongings being removed or thrown away, or being restricted from accessing food that meets their dietary restrictions or health needs.

**This bill will protect houseless people from:**

- Being fined, arrested, or jailed for sleeping, eating, or keeping themselves warm in public
- Being penalized for sharing, asking, accepting donations like food, water, or money
- Not able to defend themselves in court for sleeping, eating, and doing other activities to live
- Having their belongings searched without probable cause or a warrant
- Being threatened with arrest or fines from police when their encampment is cleared

- Not being able to retrieve their belongings if their vehicle was impounded

Current policies subject individuals to further harm, mistreatment, and criminalization. This bill asserts that people can not be discriminated against and penalized for being homeless. It specifically allows people to sleep, eat, keep their belongings, and protect themselves from the elements in public without fines, being arrested or jailed. It is the state's duty to protect our basic rights to housing, health, and safety. **For that reason, we respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HBI04.**