



Legislative Education Group (L.E.G.)

SERVING MARYLAND'S VULNERABLE POPULATIONS FOR OVER 30 YEARS

March 2008

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Dear L.E.G. Member:

We write asking you to **support** legislation that would prohibit discrimination in housing based on source of income. The proposal is HB 1261 (Housing) – Discrimination Based on Source of Income, Prohibitions.

Background:

- It has been the policy of the State of Maryland to provide for fair housing throughout the State, to all of its citizens.
- Unfortunately, in seeking safe, decent places to live, some Maryland citizens experience discrimination based on their source of income.
- Many low-income Marylanders are denied housing opportunities because they receive public assistance. (*For example, classified ads that state "No Section 8"*)

HB 1261 Would:

- Protect fair housing opportunities for all Marylanders regardless of their source of income.
- Prohibit a homeowner or landlord from refusing to sell or rent a house or apartment to a person because that person receives public assistance or relies on other lawful, non-employment sources of income, such as a pension.
- Continue the ability of home sellers and landlords to verify income; to evaluate stability, security, and creditworthiness of potential buyers or tenants; and refuse to consider income derived from criminal activity.

Why Support HB 1261?

- HB 1261 would provide low-income individuals and families a fair opportunity to use resources they have to obtain housing they can afford.
- HB 1261 would allow Marylanders, including seniors, who rely on non-employment income, such as inheritance, pensions, annuities, alimony, child support, and public assistance, a fair opportunity to rent or buy a home.
- HB 1261 would NOT erode current protections for landlords against destruction of rental property and failure to pay rent.
- Like other fair housing protections, HB 1261 would protect and insure "the peace, health, safety, prosperity, and general welfare of all the inhabitants of the State."

What YOU can do to HELP...Write or Send an Email...

Before the hearing, Friday, March 14, 2008, write or email a brief note to the legislator from your jurisdiction on the House Committee on Environmental Matters (*see list at end of alert*). If your legislator does not serve on the Environmental Matters Committee, please send a note to the Chairperson:

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh
Chair, House Environmental Matters Committee

maggie.mcintosh@house.state.md.us

To find your legislator's email, go to <http://mlis.state.md.us/> and click "Contact a legislator."
To find out whom your legislators are go to <http://mdelect.net/>

A "Sample Alert Letter" is enclosed on the following page.

We have a timely opportunity to support this legislation to ensure that Maryland citizens are not turned away from housing they can reasonably and legally afford. Your action is important to everyone who relies on non-employment sources of income, including pensions and public assistance, so they will have equal opportunities to choose a safe, decent place to live for themselves and their families.

Thank you for your willingness to speak out in support of this very important legislation to prohibit discrimination and protect individuals from being denied housing because of the source of their income. All Marylanders should have an equal right to find a place to call home.

Sincerely,



Allison Stone
L.E.G. Coordinator
Parish Social Ministry

"Love for others, and especially for the poor, is made concrete by promoting justice."

- The Hundredth Year
Pope John Paul II

S A M P L E " A L E R T " L E T T E R

Delegate's Name
House Office Building, Room ____
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support of HB 1261 (Housing) – Discrimination Based on Source of Income, Prohibitions.
To ensure that Marylanders are not denied fair housing based on their source of income.

Dear Delegate ____ OR Chairwoman McIntosh:

As a Maryland resident who cares about the housing policy of the State of Maryland and housing opportunities for low-income Marylanders, I support HB 1261.

Current market conditions put safe, decent housing out of reach for many Marylanders, especially those living on a low or fixed income. Many people rely on pensions, alimony, child support, and public assistance to fill their basic needs and the needs of their families, including housing. No one who can reasonably and legally afford a place to live should be turned away because of the source of their income. I believe that decisions to rent or sell a dwelling should be fair and just.

HB 1261 does not give people access to housing they cannot afford or does not show proper care. It does, however, ensure that all Marylanders have an equal right to find a place to call home.

I urge you to vote **FOR** House Bill 1261.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Your Address

S A M P L E " A L E R T " L E T T E R

House Environmental Matters Committee

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