



House Bill 672

Housing – Local Housing Grant Program for Homeless Veterans and Survivors of Domestic Violence

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

Date: March 21, 2019

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 672 as it establishes a housing voucher grant program to help counties target and address homelessness for particularly vulnerable and hard to reach members of their communities.

HB 672 establishes the Local Housing Grant Program for Homeless Veterans and Survivors of Domestic Violence administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development. It authorizes the Governor to appropriate funding for the program in the annual budget. Any funds awarded to a county may only supplement and not supplant any other funding received to address homelessness.

Counties have an interest in ensuring that individuals and families within their communities have access to resources. As reported in the fiscal note, there are a significant number of homeless veterans and survivors of domestic violence within the state. It highlights the 2017 Maryland Interagency Council on Homelessness Point-in-Time count which found there to be 536 and 800 homeless individuals in those two respective categories. HB 672 provides targeted funding to help counties house these individuals when existing resources to address homelessness have not been sufficient to completely resolve the problem.

Additionally, the bill authorizes the Department to give preference to counties that provide a 25% match for state funding; enact local ordinances prohibiting source of income discrimination; or adopt a “housing first” policy. These provisions help ensure that funds are awarded to jurisdictions that demonstrate a level of local investment in the program; leverage existing funding sources to bolster the impact of awarded funds; and that are conscious of administering unbiased and effective programs to quickly and successfully connect the targeted individuals with long-term housing.

HB 672 provides counties with grant resources to target and tackle the troubling and pressing issue of homelessness among veterans and survivors of sexual assault. Accordingly, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 672.