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[www.brhp.org](http://www.brhp.org)

March 15, 2023

Senator Jill P. Carter, Chair  
Baltimore City State Senate Delegation  
422 Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Honorable Members of the Baltimore City State Senate Delegation,

On behalf of the Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership (BRHP), I write to highlight BRHP's priorities for achieving racially and socially equitable public policy that ensures low-income families have access to quality and affordable homes in communities of their choice. We integrate, throughout all our policy efforts, a focus on addressing inequalities and supporting efforts that will bring more equitable distributions of resources to our communities and the housing sector.

BRHP is a non-profit organization that expands housing choices for low-income families, who have historically been excluded from housing in well-resourced neighborhoods, helping them access and transition successfully to safe, healthy, and economically vibrant communities. As the Regional Administrator for the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program, BRHP has opened pathways to a better future for low-income families for nearly 10 years. BRHP currently provides over 4,300 low-income families rental assistance in the form of the Housing Choice Voucher coupled with counseling support for families as they move from areas of concentrated poverty to areas of opportunity in Baltimore City and the five surrounding counties.

In order to sustain our organization's significant impact, we must advocate for legislation that will contribute to mitigating the historical symptoms of racial and economic inequalities that deprive our families of access to safe and affordable housing, full-service grocery stores, top-tier schools, employment opportunities, and much more that contribute to the ever-widening equity gap. Therefore, our policy priorities for the 2023 Legislative Session include but are not limited to the following pieces of legislation:

#### **Expand Access to Quality and Affordable Housing**

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**SB848|HB826** *Establish a State-Funded Housing Assistance Program to Meet the Affordable Housing Needs of Low-Income Families*

This legislation will bring Maryland into line with the growing number of states providing statewide housing choice vouchers and narrowing the ever-widening gap between families in need of rental assistance and available resources.

**SB315|HB60** *Establish the Housing Innovation Pilot Program to Address the Affordable Housing Shortage*

The Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership is an equal housing opportunity provider.





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This legislation will build upon the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County's innovative techniques and financial models to create and preserve affordable housing across Maryland.

### **SB166|HB150** *Utilize Adaptive Reuse to Expand Housing Options*

Adaptive reuse, known as AR, is the taking of old, empty buildings and repurposing them for a new use. This legislation gives the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) the ability to fund projects utilizing the adaptive reuse strategy, which can yield an increase in housing options for families facing an ever-tightening supply.

### **Ensure Protections for Low-Income Renters**

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#### **HB151** *Maintain Affordable Rents in Existing Housing Stock*

This legislation is a necessary tool to stop punitive rent increases and protect marginalized, low-income families from sudden spikes in rent and the detrimental ramifications that follow. Requiring a 120-day notice period for significant rent increases, as House Bill 151 does, will allow households who may face additional cost burdens the opportunity to better consider their options and may lead to lowering the overall rent burden in the state.

#### **SB100|HB36** *Prevent Unlicensed Landlords from Using the Taxpayer-Funded Court System to Evict Tenants*

SB 100/HB 36 is identical to SB 563, which passed the Senate (47-0) in 2022 but was vetoed by Governor Hogan. In localities that have a landlord licensing law, SB 100 would stop landlords without operating licenses from using streamlined court processes (Failure to Pay Rent, Tenant Holding Over, and Breach of Lease) to evict tenants. Rental licenses exist to ensure the safety and habitability of rental properties, this bill will prevent landlords from using eviction cases to force tenants to pay rent despite substandard and unsafe building conditions.

#### **SB807|HB691** *Tenant Safety Act*

This legislation will allow a single tenant or group of tenants to seek remedies for a landlord's failure to repair serious and dangerous defects on the rental property. This will be an invaluable tool to protect tenants from negligent and harmful landlords that are profiting from tenants enduring unhealthy living conditions.

### **Expand and Increase Assistance to Low-Income Households**

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#### **SB160|HB168** *Improve the Administration of the Temporary Cash Assistance Program (TCA)*

#### **SB420|HB562** *Provide TCA Recipients with a Housing Allowance to Alleviate Rent Burdens*

Maryland is one of only seven states that penalizes TCA recipients who may qualify for and receive housing assistance through public housing or Section 8 vouchers. SB160/HB168 will make sure that Maryland is





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instead supporting families that are battling insecurities on multiple fronts by requiring social services to disregard 100% of government housing assistance when calculating TCA benefits.

**SB144|HB169** *Improve Energy Efficiency and Reduce Costs for Low-Income Households*

Low-income residents are more exposed to broken HVAC systems, drafty windows, and unreliable electrical systems which contribute to high energy bills and unhealthy living conditions. This bill will increase federal and state resources to support and redress these crucial energy performance targets in low-income housing units.

**SB555|HB549** *Fair Wage Act of 2023*

This legislation would lift the minimum wage to \$15 by October of this year instead of the gradual lift by 2025 that was originally planned. However, \$15 an hour totals a little over \$30,000 annually, and if that income were to go to housing, a single person would have around \$750 to spend per month on rent—not including utilities. This wage increase is a great start but is not nearly enough to close the affordability gap in Maryland, which is the 8<sup>th</sup> most unaffordable state for housing in the U.S.

**Increase Transparency and Equity-Focused Oversight for State Agencies**

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These pieces of legislation require that matters of equity are at the forefront of department plans, reports, and goals developed. Racial inequality is deeply embedded in Maryland's history of policies across all sectors, equity is an urgent matter that targets low-income families, people with disabilities, and many marginalized communities.

**HB460** *Department of Housing and Community Development – Racial Equity Impact Assessment*

**HB9 | HB341** *Equity in Transportation Sector (Department of Transportation)*

**SB743|HB840** *Environmental Equity Act of 2023 (Department of the Environment)*

**SB923|HB503** *Greenspace Equity Program (Department of Natural Resources)*

BRHP encourages the delegation to support these policy priorities. Thank you for your leadership and we look forward to partnering with you to achieve racially and socially equitable legislation this session.

Sincerely,

**Adria Crutchfield**  
Executive Director  
Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership

