

Resolution to oppose SB 234 requiring certification for Homeless Shelters, including those that do not take government funding, adopting regulations, operational standards, minimum requirements and a “residents’ Bill of Rights.”

WHEREAS, The proposed certification of Homeless Shelters grows government adding employees at a time when the budget cannot be balanced without raising taxes and fees;

WHEREAS, Without government help, there have been providers of shelter in Maryland, for an example The Baltimore Rescue Mission, founded in 1956, which added the Karis House more recently, has successfully provided food, clothing, and safe shelter for thousands of men, women and children of all races, religions and ethnic backgrounds funded and staffed voluntarily by generous and compassionate citizens;

WHEREAS, Government funded shelters and those funded fully by individual and corporate gifts alike require guests to agree to certain rules and attend certain training in order to stay at the shelter and receive meals, clothing, and access to shower and bathroom facilities;

WHEREAS, Currently shelters enforce rules and curfews in order to provide a safe, predictable, orderly environment that is healthy and secure and makes the shelter owner the authority over such rules as opposed to the guest having “rights” which tends to empower the guest and undermine the authority of the owner removing the leverage the owner has to keep order;

WHEREAS, The Bill seems to exempt shelters from being certified that take in illegal aliens with wording that states: “However, ‘homeless shelter’ does not include (1) a shelter created or authorized by a State or local government entity to respond to a disaster or other large-scale emergency shelter need or (2) a facility or program where the participant signs a lease or legal agreement for a rental unit or pays rent for the use of the facility;”

WHEREAS, The analysis is in error when it states there is no impact to small business because 1. Non-profit shelters ARE small businesses that do employ people, and 2. Shelter owners who have not taken government funds may not choose to continue to run the shelter if forced to be certified and regulated creating unnecessary expense and time burdens which may result in scores of displaced homeless folks sleeping on park benches, creating tent cities as in San Francisco and Portland, begging, and stealing the things the shelters were providing;

WHEREAS, The Local economic impact, if shelters close their doors, will include more small crimes to land homeless folks in the jails where they can have a meal, running water, and safe shelter, especially in cold weather;

WHEREAS, Without the support of shelters such as small private homes or larger concerns like the Baltimore Rescue Mission, the homeless become more dependent on systems and services to survive long term instead of homelessness being more temporary;

WHEREAS, Tent cities or encampments can be unsafe, violent and certainly unhealthy and the more shelters that are available for the homeless to avoid encampments and to meet basic needs of food, running water, and a safe nights' sleep, the better for the individual and the community;

WHEREAS, People in general care about homeless people and will give of their finances and time and government should make it easier for the community to provide homeless shelters, not increase the cost and difficulty with standards that require expensive upgrades, data collection, and time requirements for training, inspections as well as unrest promulgated by "resident's rights" rather than the mindset that guests follow house rules;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That the members of the Tri-District Republican Club unanimously agreed at its January 2025 meeting to strongly oppose SB 234 and urge the Senate to defeat this flawed attempt to certify and regulate Homeless Shelters that do not receive government funding, and delay any discussion of such a Bill until Maryland has restored a reasonable reserve of revenues and can balance the budget without increasing fees and/or taxes.

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Frazier, Corresponding Secretary