



**Testimony of Vanessa Borotz  
Community Organizer, Health Care for the Homeless**

before the

**Maryland House of Delegates: Committee on Environment and Transportation**

on

**HB 0689: Department of Housing and Community Development  
Rental Assistance Programs - Duration of Assistance**

February 14, 2017  
House Office Building, Room 251  
Annapolis, Maryland

Good afternoon Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and members of the Committee. My name is Vanessa Borotz, and I am a community organizer at Health Care for the Homeless. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Health Care for the Homeless is a non-profit federally qualified health center that works to prevent and end homelessness for vulnerable individuals and families by providing quality, integrated health care and promoting access to affordable housing and sustainable incomes through direct service, advocacy and community engagement.

Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) supports policies, programs, and practices that increase the availability and accessibility of housing affordable to households with extremely low incomes. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, it costs \$26.53 per hour to afford a market rate two- bedroom apartment. In order to afford housing, low-income workers must double up, triple up, or rent sub-standard housing; for those without adequate safety nets, they can easily slip through the cracks into homelessness.

The best way to end homelessness is to prevent it.

In 2016, Health Care for the Homeless cared for 10,000 people experiencing homelessness in Baltimore. HCH provides permanent supportive housing services to hundreds of people living in deep poverty, most of whom rely on public voucher programs to fill the gap between what housing costs and what they can afford.

Our housing services team helped 325 clients get and stay housed in 2016. Every day, our team:

- manages 200+ housing vouchers;
- supports 100+ housed clients with persistent behavioral health needs;
- takes clients to appointments and grocery shopping;
- coordinates in-home medication administration; and
- helps people move into housing

Of all the people who receive housing services at Health Care for the Homeless, only one couple is paying Fair Market Rent — because both partners are working part-time. Maryland's Rental Allowance Program provides modest short-term housing assistance payments to low-income households that offsets the difference between the cost of a unit and the amount a tenant is able to pay.

We support retooling the RAP program so that it provides more time for payments to be provided, and ensures that the RAP payments cover the difference between 30 percent of the tenants income and their rent. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today, and I am happy to answer any questions.