



**Testimony of Eric Colchamiro, MPA
Director of Government Relations**

for the

Baltimore City Council: Labor Committee

on

Bill 17-0048 – Displaced Worker Protection Ordinance

May 18, 2017
Baltimore City Council Chambers
Baltimore, MD

Chairwoman Sneed and Members of the Committee. My name is Eric Colchamiro, and I am Director of Government Relations for Health Care for the Homeless. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Bill 17-0048, the Displaced Worker Protection Ordinance.

Health Care for the Homeless is a nonprofit 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.

The Displaced Worker Protection Ordinance would require incoming subcontractors to retain an existing workforce for a 90-day transition period when a service contract changes hands between companies, is outsourced or is brought in-house. The ordinance would ensure that experienced service employees are not unfairly replaced, and that a workforce is not dismissed en masse with little to no notice. It would ensure essential stability for sub-contracted workers and their families during changes in ownership.

Displaced worker protection legislation has passed in cities and states across the country, starting with Washington, D.C., more than 20 years ago. Research shows it to be a commonsense and effective regulation. For the incoming subcontractor, it saves on hiring and training and leverages the skills and expertise that experienced workers possess. Just as importantly, it protects these workers, who tend to be among our most vulnerable citizens.

The population we serve at Health Care for the Homeless is highly vulnerable, comprised of individuals living very much at the margins—in terms of housing, income and health, and all of which are very much interrelated. A person cannot maintain health without housing, housing without income, income without health, and so on. As such at Health Care for the Homeless, we provide integrated, whole-person care.

But the effectiveness of the care we provided is limited by the deep and pervasive poverty that exists in Baltimore City, exacerbated by a dearth of affordable housing and jobs that pay livable wages. The Displaced Worker Protection Ordinance offers one vital source of protection and stability for Baltimore's most vulnerable citizens. We urge the Council to pass this ordinance requiring incoming subcontractors to retain existing workforces for a 90-day transition period—and so provide vital stability for Baltimore's workers, protecting them from the devastating and untenable circumstances of a life in poverty, including homelessness.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to submit testimony. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at ecolchamiro@hchmd.org or 443-703-1165.