

## Maryland State Bar Association Delivery of Legal Services Section

### Senate Bill 643/House Bill 902

#### Human Relations – Housing Discrimination – Source of Income

### **SUPPORT**

The Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) Delivery of Legal Services Section supports Senate Bill 643 and House Bill 902. The MSBA Delivery of Legal Services Section consists of over 400 attorneys, and its mission is to promote the administration of justice in Maryland by encouraging attorneys to provide legal services in those areas of the law in which legal representation is not adequately available, including legal services for the indigent.

It is existing State policy to provide fair housing throughout Maryland and to prohibit discriminatory practices with respect to residential housing. Current Maryland law prohibits discrimination based on a number of factors, including race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, marital or family status, and disability.

Senate Bill 643 and House Bill 902 simply would amend Maryland's fair housing law to prohibit discrimination based on the source of income of a buyer or renter. Sources of income would include lawful occupations, government or private assistance, gifts or inheritances, pensions, annuities, alimony, and child support.

This legislation does not prohibit discrimination if the source of income is unlawful. In addition, this legislation would not prevent private landlords from considering other relevant factors, such as a buyer's or renter's prior inability to comply with lease terms. According to the fiscal note for this legislation, the state and local fiscal impact will be minimal.

A dozen other states and numerous local jurisdictions throughout the country already prohibit housing discrimination based on source of income. The MSBA Delivery of Legal Services Section views this as an issue of fairness. An owner should not be able to refuse to sell or rent to a potential buyer or tenant simply based upon where the buyer or tenant received lawful funds to buy or rent the home. Accordingly, the MSBA Delivery of Legal Services Section urges the Committee to support Senate Bill 643 and House Bill 902.