



MARIAN HOUSE
Women Moving from Dependence to Independence

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB45

Crimes – Mitigation and Defense – Religious Beliefs, Disability, or Homelessness

January 25, 2022

Delegate Luke Clippinger
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony of Marian House in Support of HB45

Dear Delegate Luke Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Marian House is a holistic, healing community for women and their children who are in need of housing and support services. Marian House provides comprehensive support services to assist women experiencing poverty, including those that are re-entering the community after incarceration. **I write to urge you to support House Bill 45 – Crimes – Mitigation and Defense – Religious Beliefs, Disability, or Homelessness.**

Almost forty years ago, Marian House was opened to provide reentry supports for women leaving incarceration as Sisters and laywomen recognized that lack of support contributed to recidivism rates. Since our opening, we have assisted women in reinventing themselves through services such as: counseling, substance abuse treatments, GED tutoring, job training, and providing both long- and short-term housing. All the women we have served have overcome obstacles on their journeys to become contributing members of society in the Baltimore area. These obstacles often include homelessness.

In 2020, the Point-in-Time count determined that over two thousand people experienced Baltimore on any given night. Of this population, 32% are staying in transitional housing, this population includes the women of Marian House. Currently, status of housing, along with religious beliefs and disability are viable defenses in cases of murder to manslaughter in the state of Maryland. Allowing these criterias to constitute either provocation or defense for killings in cases of murder to manslaughter is discriminatory and further promotes highly damaging stigma towards individuals who fall into these categories. While these acts of crime are indeed heinous and should be punishable, escalation of punishment solely based on characteristic such as homelessness is prejudiced and fails to acknowledge other more accurate contributing factors.

The discriminatory nature of the laws currently in place are inhumane and target specific populations of Marylanders. On behalf of the women we serve at Marian House, I respectfully urge you to take the call to action in **SUPPORT of HB45.**

Thank you for your support,



MARIAN HOUSE

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Allston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Katie Allston, LCSW-C

President & CEO