

HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF
HB 681 - INCOME TAX - CREDIT FOR PET-FRIENDLY RENTAL
DWELLING UNITS

House Ways & Means Committee
February 16, 2022



Health Care for the Homeless supports HB 681, which would create a nonrefundable credit against the State income tax for a landlord who permits a tenant to reside with a “companion animal.” Emotional support animals assist many of our clients in coping with their symptoms of disabilities as it relates to the stress of social interactions. A wider range of housing options, as this bill intends, would be hugely beneficial to these clients.

Health Care for the Homeless has a number of clients that have trouble finding pet-friendly rentals. Having a pet can do great things to improve mood and the ability for more clients to have pets in their homes would be a huge benefit to them. There is extensive professional literature concerning the therapeutic benefits of assistance animals for people with disabilities such as that experienced by many of the clients we serve. Many of our clients have disabilities due to mental illness and companion animals allow them to cope with stress in order to help them function on a daily basis. As such, many of our providers recommend an emotional support for their clients. If a client has certain limitations regarding social interactions, our providers have prescribed emotional support animals to help alleviate these difficulties. As our clients already experience homelessness or housing insecurity, being limited to housing options, on top of being denied the ability to better cope with mental illness, is hugely problematic for our clients.

We have seen the benefits that emotional support animals bring for many of our clients with disabilities. As such, we support HB 681 as a measure to expand the housing options for clients in need of emotional support animals.

Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland’s leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We work 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. We deliver integrated medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, and housing support services for over 10,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. For more information, visit www.hchmd.org.