



DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

LARRY HOGAN
Governor

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
Lt. Governor

KENNETH C. HOLT
Secretary

DATE: February 4, 2020
BILL NO.: House Bill 160
COMMITTEE: House Environment and Transportation Committee
POSITION: SUPPORT
TITLE: Baltimore Regional Neighborhood Initiative Program - Eligible Organizations - Alteration of Geographic Boundaries
SPONSORS: Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee (By Request – Departmental – Housing and Community Development)

Description of Bill:

House Bill 160 would expand the Baltimore Regional Neighborhood Initiative program to include community development organization projects and activities serving neighborhoods outside the Interstate 695 beltway if that organization's revitalization plan includes a Sustainable Community that is contiguous with a neighborhood or set of neighborhoods that are adjacent to Interstate 695.

Background:

Championed by former Maryland House of Delegates Speaker Mike Busch, the Baltimore Regional Neighborhood Initiative program (BRNI) was established in the 2014 General Assembly session. BRNI funds revitalization activities and projects in Baltimore City and surrounding communities in Anne Arundel and Baltimore counties - specifically communities that are geographically located within Interstate 695, the Baltimore Beltway. The program has provided more than \$43 million for nearly 200 projects and activities, and its positive impact has been supported by the General Assembly with several budgetary increases, most recently in Fiscal Year 2020.

As both awareness and effectiveness of BRNI has evolved, the program’s geographic requirement that eligible activities and projects be located in communities within the Baltimore Beltway was increasingly seen as an overly limiting distinction by the department and program partners, particularly given the needs around the region. Some communities are divided by Interstate 695. This creates an issue of fairness where one section of a community is eligible for BRNI funding while another is not and sometimes complicates cooperative revitalization efforts in an area. Additionally, numerous communities located outside of the beltway are culturally and colloquially considered part of the Baltimore region. Many of those communities face the same revitalization challenges as their neighbors inside the beltway, yet they are not currently eligible for BRNI support. Social and economic factors like age and quality of housing stock, a comprehensive revitalization plan, and community needs are all more appropriate requirements for BRNI eligibility than an arbitrary geographic boundary.

With this proposed expansion, more Baltimore area communities can be served by BRNI. However, needs-based assessments will still apply to these areas, and the overall BRNI application process will remain competitive. The expansion of program eligibility still includes a Sustainable Community requirement that continues the department’s traditional, effective, targeted approach of deploying revitalization resources for worthy projects and services that support low- and moderate-income residents of the Baltimore region.

DHCD Position:

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development requests a **favorable report** on House Bill 160.



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

7800 HARKINS RD ● LANHAM, MD 20706 ● DHCD.MARYLAND.GOV
301-429-7400 ● 1-800-756-0119 ● TTY/RELAY 711 or 1-800-735-2258



- BRNI Areas**
1. Belair-Edison Neighborhoods Inc.
 2. Central Baltimore Partnership
 3. CHAI - Northwest Baltimore City/County
 4. City Life Community Builders - Broadway, East
 5. Diversified Housing Development - Lochearn
 6. Druid Heights CDC
 7. Dundalk Renaissance
 8. East Baltimore Development Inc. - Middle East
 9. Greater Baybrook Alliance
 10. Neighborhood Housing Services - Greater Rosemont
 11. Westport CEDC - Harbor West Collaborative
 12. Healthy Neighborhoods - Reservoir Hill
 13. Healthy Neighborhoods - Liberty Heights
 14. Southeast CDC
 15. Southwest Partnership
 16. Rebuild Metro - Johnson Square/Oliver
 17. Upton Planning Committee
 18. Govans Ecumenical Development Co. - York Road
 19. Market Center CDC
- Sustainable Communities
 Priority Funding Areas

