



10400 Detrick Avenue
Kensington, MD 20895-2484
(240) 627-9400



February 28, 2020

Honorable Kumar Barve, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 251
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Barve:

On behalf of the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County (HOC), thank you for the opportunity to express HOC's general support for HB 1149 – The Social Housing Act. We applaud Delegate Stewart and co-sponsors for their efforts and commitment to finding bold, yet pragmatic solutions to the housing crisis we face in Maryland and in our region.

HOC is the designated Public Housing Agency for Montgomery County, Maryland. In this capacity, and in fulfillment of our state-chartered mission, HOC provides affordable housing resources to approximately 15,000 households, as well as services for elderly customers and persons with disabilities. In the face of declining federal investment in affordable housing, HOC has sought more sustainable funding streams and development practices to support our mission to produce and preserve affordable housing in our county.

The supply of affordable housing is at the heart of every significant challenge communities around the country are trying to tackle – in the Metropolitan Washington area alone there is a projected shortfall of 75,000 units to meet overall housing demand by 2030, including units for middle- and low-income households. More broadly, Maryland has a deficit of more than 256,000 units of housing affordable to households at 50% of the Area Median Income and below. These households keep the economic engine of our state running – they work in our restaurants, our office buildings, our hospitals – and they demand high-quality, affordable housing in and near the communities where they work.

Done well, housing policy works to ensure that citizens can live, work and recreate in communities where they can maintain a strong quality of life. Social Housing and the mixed-income model are not new to HOC and Montgomery County. The Vienna Social Housing model – the inspiration for this legislation – is predicated on the fact that socioeconomically diverse communities owned by public, mission-oriented entities are not only societally beneficial but fiscally viable, as well. This is a model we have championed in Chevy Chase, Maryland with The Lindley, earning national recognition from the Urban Land Institute

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with its 2019 Jack Kemp Award. And so, we find ourselves at the forefront of affordable housing innovation and we ask jurisdictions from around our great state to join us.

In the absence of federal investment in affordable housing production, it becomes incumbent upon our state and local government to pursue every avenue toward funding and developing solutions to the burgeoning housing crisis. HB 1149 supports a sensible, proven best practice in affordable housing development – a tool that cannot and should not be ignored if we are serious about meeting the housing demands of Maryland’s citizens.

We thank you for your consideration of this bill and hope you will join us in getting, and keeping, Maryland families housed by supporting HB 1149.

Respectfully,



Stacy L. Spann
Executive Director

cc: Maryland House of Delegates, Environment and Transportation Committee