



Young Democrats of Maryland

HB 241– Housing and Community Development – Just Community Designation Environment and Transportation Committee – 1/30/24 SUPPORT

Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this priority bill for the Young Democrats of Maryland. YDM represents the next generation of Marylanders and seeks to advance policies that will allow Maryland youth to thrive.

I am thrilled to write in strong support of HB 241, which authorizes the Governor to designate areas as Just Communities, meaning that communities which have experienced historical and ongoing socio-economic marginalization would get prioritization when it comes to state funding for affordable housing programs. With the population of Maryland continuing to grow, it is critical that underserved communities are given the resources to support that growth.

Unfortunately, historically certain Maryland neighborhoods were often neglected when it comes to affordable housing investments, and traditionally, these areas were majority-minority, and/or working-class.¹ In announcing his proposed FY2025 budget, Governor Moore has proposed over 200 million dollars for housing and community development projects. When directed towards communities in the most need, these dollars can make a difference in redevelopment, and closing health, wealth, and housing gaps all while improving the quality of life of the residents who live there. This bill is crucial for youth, as many young Marylanders cannot afford to pay rent or mortgage in many parts of the state. Supporting housing development in historically disenfranchised areas will allow young people in these areas to stay connected, work, and invest in their home communities, versus being forced out due to lack of affordable housing options.

We applaud the Governor for his attention to the top issue on the minds of young Marylanders. We would encourage the General Assembly to do the same by supporting this innovative proposal, and we strongly urge a favorable committee report.

Sincerely,

¹ “Maryland Dept. of Housing and Community Development: Origins.” Maryland Manual Online. <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/17dhcd/html/dhcdf.html>

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