

January 17, 2025

The Honorable Senator Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support for Senate Bill 266 – Local Comprehensive Planning and State Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy – Planning Principles

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

On behalf of Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), I am writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 266 (SB0266), “Local Comprehensive Planning and State Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy – Planning Principles.” This legislation offers a critical opportunity to strengthen Maryland’s planning frameworks by prioritizing equity and sustainability in development efforts, principles that are fundamental to empowering the state’s Latino and immigrant communities.

Latino and immigrant populations in Maryland, who comprise over 12% of the state’s residents, have consistently been left behind in development decisions that shape the communities where they live and work. SB0266 ensures that future growth will account for diverse community needs, particularly in under-resourced neighborhoods where systemic inequities have long created barriers to economic opportunity, affordable housing, and access to essential services.

This bill sets the stage for local governments to adopt a more inclusive approach to comprehensive planning, ensuring that the voices of historically marginalized communities are incorporated into decision-making processes. By embedding equitable principles into planning visions, SB0266 paves the way for actionable changes, such as increasing access to community services, enhancing infrastructure in underserved areas, and creating spaces that reflect the cultural diversity of Maryland’s Latino residents.

MLU has firsthand experience with the transformative power of equitable planning. Through our advocacy, we have supported local efforts to improve infrastructure and ensure housing equity, and we have seen how inclusive planning can foster safer, healthier, and more vibrant communities. SB0266 builds upon these principles by promoting a forward-looking planning framework that holds local governments accountable for addressing disparities and investing in equitable growth.

We strongly urge the members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to support SB0266 and advance this vital legislation. Maryland’s future must be one where every resident, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status, has an equal opportunity to thrive in their community. This bill is an essential step in realizing that vision.

Sincerely,
Carlos Orbe, Jr.

Communications and Public Affairs Specialist
Maryland Latinos Unidos
corbejr@mdlatinosunidos.org