

**SB 518 Testimony, 2025\_02\_06.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Martin

Position: FAV

# Historic Takoma, Inc.

7328 Carroll Avenue  
Takoma Park, Maryland 20912  
*historictakoma.org*

February 6, 2025

## **TESTIMONY OF HISTORIC TAKOMA, INC. IN SUPPORT OF SB 513 Jennifer Martin, President**

Senator Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceeding Committee:

Historic Takoma strongly supports the enactment of SB513 as a means to efficiently remove unlawful racial covenants on properties in the State of Maryland.

Historic Takoma, Inc. is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization incorporated in the State of Maryland in 1979 for the purpose of protecting, preserving, and sharing the history and culture of Takoma Park. Our organization has championed the removal of unlawful racial covenants, conducting relevant research, educating the community through workshops and talks, and helping residents remove such language from their deeds.

Our [Covenants Project](https://historictakoma.org/covenant/) ([historictakoma.org/covenant/](https://historictakoma.org/covenant/)) documents the background and history of racial covenants and includes a database of all known racial covenants in Takoma Park with the location and text of those covenants. We developed a [guide for property owners](#) to use to request removal of unlawful racial covenants, have conducted a number of workshops on the removal process, and have worked with individual property owners to assist them with the removal process. Although the actual process is a simple one, it can be daunting to many property owners. With an estimated 1,100 or more covenants on properties in Takoma Park removal of them one by one is a tedious and lengthy endeavor.

As part of our work to both publicize the existence of these unlawful racial covenants and seek a more efficient means of removing them, we contacted the City of Takoma Park about utilizing the authority under current law for municipalities and counties to request removal of unlawful racial covenants.

Unfortunately the statute requires that, prior to requesting removal of the covenants, the city must notify anyone with an “ownership interest” in an affected property by first class mail. This imposes an enormous administrative and fiscal burden on the city. To provide such notice the city would need to identify all those with “ownership interest” (a vague and undefined term) and their mailing addresses. With over 1,100 properties affected in Takoma Park this could require hundreds of hours of city staff time and the preparation of several thousand letters. Throughout the state, other municipalities wishing to pursue removal of unlawful racial covenants face the same obstacles. The current statute is well intentioned but is practically unworkable.

The proposed legislation, SB513, addresses the practicality issues by providing the municipality with three additional notice options via posting notices in newspapers, at the courthouse, and on the city website. Combined with many outreach/communication tools (such the city newsletter and social media along with Historic Takoma’s website, newsletter, and social media) these options will provide an efficient means of notice to those with “ownership interest.” The public will be afforded notice and the city will be spared the extreme administrative and fiscal burden of the current notice requirement. This is a win-win situation for property owners, the City of Takoma Park, and other municipalities in the State of Maryland, all of whom have an interest in removing these unlawful covenants.

Once enacted, Historic Takoma stands ready to assist the city with the notification process and submission of the necessary documentation for removal of the unlawful covenants. Your support and approval of the legislation will make accomplishing this public policy goal a reality and will further the cause of social justice in our communities.

###

# **Poyer Testimony for SB 513.pdf**

Uploaded by: Scott Poyer

Position: FAV

**SB513 Real Property - Unlawfully Restrictive Covenant Modifications - County or Municipality Notice Requirements**

**Judicial Proceedings Committee – February 6, 2025**

**Sponsor: Senator Shaneka Henson**

**Position: Favorable**

**Written Testimony of Scott Poyer, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Anne Arundel County**

Thank you, members of the committee, for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 513. My name is Scott Poyer, Clerk of the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County. I am also a member of the Maryland Circuit Court Clerks Association, which represents the 24 elected clerks of the circuit court in Maryland.

Myself, and other members of the Clerks of the Circuit Court, have reviewed SB 513 and have no objections to the bill. I believe the bill, as written, strengthens Maryland statutes related to unlawfully restrictive covenants on real property.

Accordingly, I ask the committee for a favorable report on SB 513.

# **SB513 Senator Henson**

Uploaded by: Senator Henson Senator Henson

Position: FAV

SHANEKA HENSON  
Legislative District 30  
Anne Arundel County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children,  
Youth, and Families



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 203  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3578  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3578  
Shaneka.Henson@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SPONSOR TESTIMONY**

**Senate Bill 513**  
**Real Property - Unlawfully Restrictive Covenant Modifications**  
**County or Municipality Notice Requirements**

Chairman Smith and Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce and provide important details regarding SB 513 - Real Property - Unlawfully Restrictive Covenant Modifications - County or Municipality Notice Requirements

For the record, I am Senator Shaneka Helson from the 30th Legislative District of Anne Arundel County, MD.

The request for this bill originates from the Mayor of Takoma Park and is intended to address an existing issue within the current law's notice requirement. The current law requires municipalities to send "written notice of intent to execute and record the restrictive covenant modifications by first class mail, to all persons with an ownership interest in the property."

The modification in SB 513, adds content in Section 3-112-C-2 (iii) that enables municipalities to strengthen their notification options to include posting a public notice in a newspaper or municipal newsletter, which provides for a more general circulation to the public within the municipality, on the door of the courthouse or available bulletin board and on the official website of the municipality.

This Bill is also supported by the Honorable Talisha Searcy, Mayor of Takoma Park, MD. and County Clerks Association.

In closing, I respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report for SB 513 to strengthen the public notification process for restrictive covenants.

# **Takoma Park 2025 - SB 513 FAV - Unlawful Restricti**

Uploaded by: Talisha Searcy

Position: FAV





# CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**February 6, 2025**

**SB 513: Real Property - Unlawfully Restrictive Covenant - Modification by Municipalities  
Support**

The City of Takoma Park supports Senate Bill SB 513.

It is unlawful to refuse to sell or lease real property to a person because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, familial status, or disability or to include in any instrument a restrictive covenant based on such characteristics. Many deeds continue to contain unlawful restrictive language, despite it being unenforceable. Over 1200 properties within the City of Takoma Park have unlawful restrictive language in their deed.

The City supported changes in 2023 to § 3-112 of the Real Property Article which provided local governments with the ability to review deeds on file, and with the required notice, modify deeds to remove restrictive covenants. However, the City has found practical challenges in meeting the state's notification requirements to effectively remove these covenants. For example, how should the City define and identify persons with an ownership interest in a property?

The City appreciates the sponsors of this bill as it includes additional notification methods, like newspaper and website postings, which will make implementation easier.

The City of Takoma Park wishes to expedite the removal of covenants from all deeds within the city. We aim to correct historical injustices and affirm our stance against racism. But we need SB 513 to make this effort easier for our community and other municipalities wishing to follow our example.

**We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 513.**

**MDDC FWA SB513.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rebecca Snyder

Position: FWA



**Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association**

P.O. Box 26214 | Baltimore, MD 21210

443-768-3281 | [rsnyder@mddcpres.com](mailto:rsnyder@mddcpres.com)

[www.mddcpres.com](http://www.mddcpres.com)

To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

Date: February 4, 2025

**Re: SB 513 – Favorable with Amendments**

The Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Press Association represents a diverse membership of newspaper publications, from large metro dailies such as the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun, to hometown newspapers such as the Star Democrat and Maryland Independent, to publications such as The Daily Record, Baltimore Jewish Times, and online-only publications such as the Baltimore Banner, Maryland Matters and Baltimore Brew.

The Press Association urges the Committee amend SB 513 to create more clarity in the notice requirements proposed by the bill. SB 513 would allow a county or municipality to execute and record a restrictive covenant modification to an unlawfully restrictive covenant if, among other requirements, the entity publishes a notice in a newspaper of general circulation, or posts on the door or bulletin board of the courthouse or posts on the official website of the county or municipality where the property is located. This bill provides three options for notice to be provided to the community at large, which requires community members who do not have an ownership interest in the property to constantly check three different venues on the possibility that this notice would appear. That places an undue burden on community members and defeats the purpose of the enhanced notice requirements.

We agree that more notice is better notice, and suggest replacing “OR” with “AND” at the end of Page f2, Line 31. This would mean that in addition to the first class mail notice to property owners, the community would be notified of the county or municipality’s action by publishing in the local newspaper (and by extension its website), posting on the door / bulletin board of the courthouse AND by posting on the official website of the county or municipality, recognizing that news publications have a far wider audience reach than government websites.

This amendment would bring this bill in line with the best practices of public notices, which means they should be independent, accessible, verifiable, and reach the widest possible audience to ensure trust in the process and information.

We respectfully ask for the bill to be amended.



**We believe a strong news media is  
central to a strong and open society.**

**SB 513 - MML - OPP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Angelica Bailey Thupari

Position: UNF



Maryland Municipal League  
*The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns*

## TESTIMONY

February 6, 2025

**Committee:** Senate Judicial Proceedings

**Bill:** SB 513 - Real Property - Unlawfully Restrictive Covenant Modifications - County or Municipality Notice Requirements

**Position:** Unfavorable

**Reason for Position:**

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) respectfully opposes Senate Bill 513, which significantly changes existing notice requirements relating to the recordation of restrictive covenant modifications.

The League strongly supported the 2023 legislation that enabled local governments to modify racially restrictive covenants ([SB 335/](#)[HB 182](#), 2023): allowing racially restrictive covenants to remain when they could be fairly and expeditiously removed is unconscionable, and the methods for removal proposed were reasonable and achievable for local governments.

In contrast, the advanced methods of providing public notice proposed in HB 513 are unduly burdensome and impractical for many municipalities.

- Publication in a newspaper of general circulation – This can be expensive for just one post, let alone four posts, as mandated by the bill. This is especially true for municipalities located in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, where most of these racially restrictive covenants remain, and where the newspaper of general circulation charges \$500 per public notice.
- Post notice on a courthouse door – Many municipalities don't have a courthouse within their boundaries, and if the courthouse for the County is not located nearby, the resident is unlikely to see it.
- Website publication – This is inexpensive and effective, but the bill fails to dictate how long the notice must be posted.

For these reasons, the League respectfully requests that the committee provide Senate Bill 118 with an unfavorable report. For more information, please contact Angelica Bailey Thupari, Director of Advocacy and Public Affairs, at [angelicab@mdmunicipal.org](mailto:angelicab@mdmunicipal.org) or (443) 756-0071/ Thank you for your consideration.

*The Maryland Municipal League uses its collective voice to advocate, empower and protect the interests of our 160 local governments members and elevates local leadership, delivers impactful solutions for our communities, and builds an inclusive culture for the 2 million Marylanders we serve.*

---

47 State Circle, Suite 403 Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(410) 295-9100 [www.mdmunicipal.org](http://www.mdmunicipal.org)