
ROBERT G. CASSILLY
Harford County Executive



ROBERT S. McCORD
Director of Administration

February 12, 2026

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama
Chair, Economic Matters Committee
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Opposition Letter on HB 235 – “Housing and Community Development - Neighborhood Business Development Program - Local Approval Requirement”

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Harford County to respectfully register my opposition to House Bill 235, which would remove the local approval requirement for applications to the Neighborhood Business Development Program administered by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development.

Harford County values state investment in economic and community development programs that support small businesses, revitalize commercial areas, and strengthen neighborhoods. At the same time, local governments have a unique responsibility to ensure that development and financial assistance activities are aligned with community priorities, comprehensive plans, and local regulatory frameworks.

Under current law, applicants for Neighborhood Business Development Program assistance must secure approval from the local government in which a project is located before applying for state support. This requirement ensures coordination between state resources and local planning, helps avoid conflicts with zoning and infrastructure capacity, and preserves local accountability for development outcomes.

HB 235 would eliminate this local approval requirement, allowing applicants to pursue state funding without local review or endorsement. Removing this safeguard risks undermining local land use planning, public investment strategies, and fiscal oversight. Local governments are best positioned to evaluate whether a proposed project is compatible with community needs, whether adequate infrastructure exists to support it, and whether complementary public improvements or mitigation is appropriate.

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The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama

February 10, 2026

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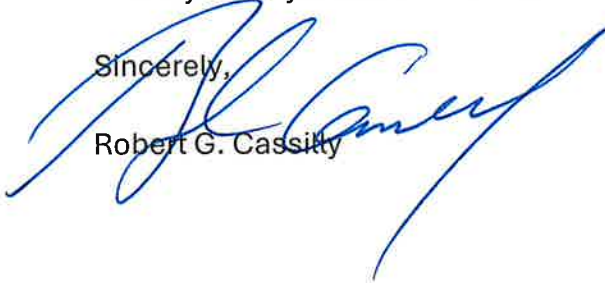
Furthermore, the local approval process provides an opportunity for meaningful public engagement, transparency, and intergovernmental coordination that strengthens both state and local investment decisions. Eliminating this step could result in proposals that bypass local priorities, place unforeseen demands on county services, or conflict with local economic development strategies.

For these reasons, Harford County respectfully urges the Committee to oppose HB 235. We believe that maintaining a role for local government review and approval in state economic assistance programs fosters better outcomes, preserves local planning authority, and supports responsible stewardship of public resources.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Cassilly

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Cassilly", is written over the typed name "Robert G. Cassilly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.