

May 27, 2016

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.
President of the Senate
H-107 State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Mr. President:

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I have vetoed Senate Bill 540 – *Morgan State University – Student Housing*.

Senate Bill 540 represents an improper and unwarranted interference by the State legislature into what is clearly a local zoning matter in Baltimore City. Local jurisdictions must be permitted to exert authority over zoning without the threat of reversal by members of the General Assembly, the vast majority of whom have little or no understanding of the interplay among community associations in Baltimore City.

This bill would prohibit the Board of Regents of Morgan State University from entering into any contract for student housing that is located in the 1500 block of Havenwood Road in Baltimore City unless the Hillen Road Improvement Association approves. The bill also specifies conditions that must be met if the Morgan State University Board of Regents enters into such a student housing contract.

Senate Bill 540 places artificial state legislative constraints over Baltimore City zoning authority. It would remove the ability of the local authorities to enforce zoning laws and would instead give undue and wholly improper influence to one specific community association to make a determination on whether a development project should move forward.

The proposed development at Havenwood Road is an innovative public-private partnership that offers the amenities of student housing, food stores, and shopping that could spur additional economic activity adjoining the campus of Morgan State University. It is not the role of the State to micromanage such local zoning and development issues nor should the State rescind zoning authority from the local government and place it in the hands of a few members of one third-party group. If allowed to take effect, Senate Bill 540 would have serious implications for the State as a whole by undermining the local authority of municipalities and counties.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Senate Bill 540.

Sincerely,

Governor Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.