



Committee: Environment & Transportation

Testimony on: HB 1406 - “Land Use - Development - Middle Housing (Modest Home Choices Act of 2020)”

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 4, 2020

The undersigned organizations urge a favorable report on HB 1406. The bill promotes smart growth by better enabling localities to concentrate new housing in existing communities. Mitigating urban sprawl has an important role to play in reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, and contributes to the creation of more livable and affordable communities.

The bill will require local governments to allow triplexes in certain areas where transit, jobs, or household income is concentrated, where land is zoned for residential use and single-family detached houses are permitted. The Department of Housing and Community Development will be required to develop a model ordinance by April 2021 for “middle housing” (defined in the bill to include duplexes, triplexes, and similar housing). By 2022 (unless an extension is granted), local governments will be required to adopt land use regulations or amend their comprehensive plan to implement the triplex requirement, and to consider ways to increase the affordability of middle housing. In this regard, the bill prohibits local governments from “imposing onerous zoning regulations” that would prevent middle housing from being developed.

Every person has a right to a safe and healthy environment. We support policies that help spur the development of affordable and infill housing, and which also uphold tenants’ rights. Currently, Maryland is facing a major shortage of affordable housing. Zoning regulations that favor lower density tend to increase vehicle miles traveled, degrade air and water quality, and destroy open space, farmland and critical habitat. This bill would help mitigate these issues.

Our state needs to expand housing choices in neighborhoods, especially to offer access to educational and economic opportunity for residents who, because of race, ethnicity, disability, and/or income have historically been marginalized and displaced in land use decisions.

In summary, this bill would incentivize smart, sustainable development and allow Maryland residents greater access to affordable housing. We urge a favorable report on HB 1406.

Maryland Sierra Club

Climate Law & Policy Project

**Takoma Park Mobilization
Environment Committee**

CCAN Action Fund

**Sunrise Movement Howard
County**

Transportation Alliance

**Maryland Legislative
Coalition**

**Unitarian Universalist
Legislative Ministry of
Maryland**