



Testimony SB 367
Education, Health and Environmental Committee
February 5, 2021
Position: UNFAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Pinsky & Members of the Education, Health and Environmental Committee:

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland's community development sector and serves nearly 200 member organizations. CDN—focuses on small affordable housing developers, housing counseling agencies and community-based non-profits across the state of Maryland. The mission of CDN is to promote, strengthen and advocate for the community development sector throughout Maryland's urban, suburban and rural communities. CDN envisions a state in which all communities are thriving and where people of all incomes have abundant opportunities for themselves and their families.

SB 367 requires an application for the Community Legacy Program, the Neighborhood Business Development Program, and the Baltimore Regional Neighborhood Initiative Program (BRNI) within the Department of Housing and Community Development to include a letter of support from the legislative district in which a certain project or plan is proposed; and applying the Act prospectively. We believe there are unintended negative consequences to this bill.

For both for-profit and non-profit partners in community development, best practice includes getting the input of community stakeholders for every project they may take on. This may include meetings with schools, civic associations and other appropriate partners in the community. Our partners appreciate the need for local jurisdictions and project sponsors to engage with the community in planning community revitalization projects. We support the significant effort that goes into developing Sustainable Community plans, local Consolidated Plans and local land use plans.

Since 2013, CDN and our partners have worked hard to remove application requirements that would bring approval of specific DHCD funded projects into the political process. We are deeply concerned that this bill would endanger our members' efforts to provide affordable housing opportunities in urban, suburban and rural jurisdictions.

Further, we suspect that this legislation will open our state to Fair Housing challenges. While we understand the requirement for community input, Fair Housing laws prevent communities from requiring permission or notification of elected officials.

We respectfully request an UNFAVORABLE report.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director, Community Development Network of Maryland