



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 2, 2022

To: The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Delegate Jen Terrasa
District 13, Howard County

Re: Sponsor Testimony in Support of HB1147, Real Property - Cooperative
Housing Corporations, Condominiums, and Homeowners Associations -
Virtual Meetings

Dear Chairman Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present HB1147, which requires that virtual meetings of a common ownership community (i.e. cooperative housing corporation, condominium, or homeowners association) provide participants a reasonable opportunity to participate in the meeting and that they have equal access to any available chat function.

You may recall that the General Assembly passed legislation last year authorizing the governing bodies of common ownership communities the ability to use virtual means to conduct meetings. (Delegate Holmes' bill, HB1023, passed unanimously out of committee and both chambers and was enacted June 1, 2021.) HB1147 simply clarifies some best practices for conducting those meetings.

As a member of Delegate Holmes' Common Ownership Community Taskforce, I participated in conversations about how virtual meetings have been conducted over the past year. While these types of meetings may have begun as a result of necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become clear that they will likely remain a regular option. Such virtual meetings are a convenient and effective way for people juggling work and family life to have the opportunity to attend.

With regard to meetings conducted by COC boards, some concerns were raised in the Taskforce about HOA boards using the chat feature without opening it up so all attendees can see it or blocking the chat altogether. We also heard that community members were muted and not given the ability to unmute, and thus were prevented

from participating in the meeting in any meaningful way, asking questions, or even objecting if they observed a violation like lack of quorum. Without any ability to participate in the meeting, their presence on a zoom or other virtual platform is no different than merely watching a meeting on TV. This issue is something that various bodies have been grappling with across the Country.

Of course we've all experienced or heard of an experience when someone becomes unruly in a virtual meeting, that's why HB1147 provides for the ability to mute a participant if they become disruptive and is provided a warning.

HB1147 is a simple, straightforward bill that just ensures fair participation and transparency for all the residents living in common ownership communities.

I urge a favorable report of HB1147.