

Testimony

Housing and Community Development – Affordable Housing – Listing and Disposal of Real Property

Position: Support

FEBRUARY 22, 2022

Chair Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

Founded in 1992, Habitat for Humanity Choptank is a volunteer supported 501(c)3 non-profit organization operating in Dorchester and Talbot Counties on the beautiful Eastern Shore of Maryland. Throughout our 30-year history, Habitat for Humanity Choptank has worked to empower low-income households to improve their housing conditions, addressing aspects of housing needs from new construction to rehabs and repairs as well as weatherizations. We will build our 100<sup>th</sup> house this year in neighborhoods with a high level of poverty, significant aging and distressed housing stock, a history of neglect and redlining practices, and a high percentage of vacancies and rentals.

Habitat for Humanity Choptank fully supports HB0927, legislation that proposes to provide nonprofits with the opportunity to acquire land at little to no cost for affordable home ownership. As we all have witnessed, the lack of supply and high demand for affordable homes is pushing land and housing costs through the roof. Couple this with supply chain and labor shortages, and costs are further exacerbated. We must work together to creatively solve this supply and demand challenge and mission-based nonprofit housing developers can be key to these efforts. Therefore, we wholeheartedly support HB0927, but encourage legislators to support streamlining the process to get properties into the hands of housing developers, without encumbering new ideas and legislation with burdensome requirements that state governments often are required to operate under.

Stable housing has a tremendous impact on family and community health, improved education outcomes for children and increased financial stability and opportunity. In addition to these benefits, building and repairing homes also stimulates other sectors of the economy – driving additional spending and creating more local jobs. Unfortunately, the demand for affordable and decent housing outstrips the current supply, especially at lower tiers, and the lack of supply of affordable homes continues to be a barrier to those seeking to become homeowners, a place where generational wealth is often first created.

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To this end, Habitat for Humanity Choptank fully supports HB0927. The citizens and communities of Maryland need your leadership in supporting and investing in new solutions to age old problems and we encourage you to support this legislation. Thank you.

JoAnn Hansen

Executive Director

Habitat for Humanity Choptank