



31 January, 2022

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support for Senate Bill 0524

Public Utilities – Energy Efficiency and Conservation Programs – Energy Performance Targets and Low-Income Housing

Dear Chairwoman Kelley and members of the Finance Committee:

We are writing to offer AIA Maryland's support for Senate Bill 0524, requiring the state DHCD to provide energy efficiency and conservation programs designed to achieve incremental gross energy savings, particularly for low-income housing. This bill is critical for enhancing the lives of low-income residents in the state of Maryland. Existing programs like EmPOWER Maryland and the Multifamily Energy Efficiency and Housing Affordability Program (MEEHA) are so important to developers of low-income housing. These programs make quality, sustainable affordable housing projects happen and are critical to fueling additional development of affordable housing in our state. The energy retrofits these programs help to fund, support meeting the aggressive requirements for energy savings that are necessary to combat climate change. In addition to energy savings, residents can realize significant savings with utility bills; savings that can instead go towards other things to improve the lives of low-income families. We know that many of these families are cost burdened, paying from 1/3 to over 1/2 of their income to rent and reducing that burden is significant. Weatherization strategies also help improve the public health, ensuring better indoor air quality in the home which can lead to less sick days from school or work and has proven to reduce incidents of asthma. This bill outlines a great plan for accountability and reporting on the efforts being made across the state so we can study and realize the true benefits of energy retrofits. I am very interested to see how the energy retrofits implement in low-income housing can result in positive impact for the state in areas of development, health, and economy.

AIA Maryland represents almost 2,000 Architects in the state of Maryland. Many of our members conduct research, advocate for, and successfully work on affordable housing projects. Our architect and allied members have a wealth of knowledge regarding the design and construction of energy retrofit strategies. As such, we recommend that you consider adding one member to the Green and Healthy Task Force that is outlined in this bill. We believe that someone who designs or builds affordable housing and is familiar with the practical implementation of energy efficiency measures may prove to be a huge benefit to the group. Adding creative minds to the Task Force who work on physically adding these retrofits to our housing stock can help identify ways to implement measures for efficiency and effectiveness. Please consider adding this recommendation to the bill in future drafts, as we believe it can yield a great benefit to the program.

We encourage you to vote in favor of this legislation and encourage Maryland's continued commitment and investment in supporting legislation that benefits affordable housing. Thank you for your consideration and your vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Reilly', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Martina Reilly, AIA, LEED AP BD+C
Director, AIA Maryland