



Senate Bill 770 – Public Utilities- Homeownership Utility Repair Fund

Position: Favorable

Maryland REALTORS® are pleased to see the establishment of a Homeownership Utility Repair Fund. The fund will assist both low income and middle-income homeowners with the costs from utility companies as it relates to maintenance, repairs, and upgrades. With recent climate change legislation focused specifically on future upgrades, we believe this is much needed opportunity to support a broader range of Maryland homeowners.

According to the “Maryland Housing Needs Assessment and 10-Year Strategic Plan (Needs Assessment),” Maryland will be adding 178,000 new households between 2020 and 2030. The Needs Assessment also estimates that in 2030 more than half of all new households in Maryland will qualify as low-income. As the requirements for any new additional units expand to meet the eventual net-zero requirements, the cost impacts on new residential housing are unclear and specifically, the rising cost of utility changes as technology evolves to meet these challenges.

The U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services provides an analysis of both Census and Energy Department data which shows the following gap between how much assistance (LIHEAP) low-income households need and how much is available- in Maryland, a monthly income gap of \$1449 persists for utility costs and in the lowest income categories, the utility costs tend to be the highest- for example, in Charles County, 40% of the total cost of living is for utility costs. Additionally, the Maryland Fuel Fund stipulates utility costs as the number two reason for homelessness in Maryland.

This is a critical time for Maryland to implement this fund to support homeowners as they face increased costs to maintain and remain in their homes. For these reasons, the REALTORS® enthusiastically recommends a favorable report.

For more information, contact

bill.castelli@mdrealtor.org, susan.mitchell@mdrealtor.org,

lisa.may@mdrealtor.org or theresa.kuhns@mdrealtor.org