



April 4, 2023

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Hon. Ben Barnes, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Lowe House Office Building, Room 121
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Testimony in support of SB643: Housing – Community Development Program Act – Funding

Members

Northeast Housing Initiative

Dear Chairman Barnes,

Charm City Land Trusts

Chairman Barnes and the esteemed members of the House Appropriations Committee:

Harbor West Collective Affordable Housing Land Trust

My name is Krystle Okafor. I serve as director of policy and planning at SHARE Baltimore, Baltimore's community land trust coalition. SHARE Baltimore is pleased to support SB643, the Community Development Fund bill. The Community Development Fund bill provides \$5 million annually for capital and operating grants related to affordable housing, neighborhood revitalization, community organizing, and other purposes.

South Baltimore Community Land Trust

Cherry Hill Community Development Corporation

SHARE Baltimore mobilized in 2018 to train, convene, and otherwise support Baltimore's community land trusts. Community land trusts are nonprofits that act as long-term custodians of land, using shared governance to develop and preserve land for various community needs. In Baltimore, our land trusts are engaged in the exact work contemplated in the Community Development Fund bill. Baltimore's community land trusts develop housing for low- and moderate-income families, restore blocks long abandoned to vacancy and blight, and foster relationships and build power with neighborhood residents.

York Road Partnership

As SHARE Baltimore's members engage in this important work, capital and operating grants from the Community Development Fund would be a tremendous support fit for the tremendous need in Baltimore City. 2022 data from the National Low-Income Housing Coalition show that there are just 38 affordable and available units for every



100 low-income households in the Baltimore metropolitan area. What is more, 2020 data from the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance show that 7.7% of Baltimore City's residential properties are vacant and, in neighborhoods hardest hit by urban decay, the residential property vacancy rate is as high as 32%.

Community land trusts are well-positioned to address both Baltimore's housing affordability gap and distressed residential properties. In neighborhoods where housing prices are escalating, community land trusts confer stability by purchasing land and leasing the homes on them to families in need at affordable rates. In neighborhoods where properties are in distress, community land trusts confer stability by improving housing quality, empowering residents, and laying the foundation for thriving communities. If enacted, SB643 would further and accelerate the efforts of Baltimore's community land trusts.

I urge you to pass SB643 so that we at SHARE Baltimore and our member community land trusts may continue to own and develop land for the benefit of the community. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

/s/

Krystle Okafor

Director of Policy & Planning
SHARE Baltimore