

SB296_Whole-HomeRepairsAct2023_LOS_CF.pdf

Uploaded by: Brian Sims

Position: FAV



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 13, 2023

To: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Re: Letter of Support - Senate Bill 296 - Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

Dear Chair Feldman:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 296, which would establish a program in the Department of Housing and Community Development to fund home repairs to improve conditions in housing units and support workforce development programs. Housing quality and economic opportunity—social drivers of health—improve health outcomes.

Maryland hospitals care for millions of people each year, around-the-clock. In addition to the care they provide, they continuously evaluate factors inside and outside of their organizations to promote the health and the well-being of the populations they serve and the tens of thousands they employ. Hospitals are committed to addressing the social drivers of health, which includes cross-sector collaboration and investments outside of traditional health care settings.

The Office of the Surgeon General identified the leading causes of preventable death, disease, and disability as health hazards that may occur in homes.¹ Poor quality housing can raise the risk of infectious or chronic disease and exacerbate existing health conditions.² Addressing the quality of housing as a public health issue may prevent and reduce negative health outcomes.

The American Psychological Association considers financial stress and economic hardship leading stressors in America, with impacts similar to adverse childhood experiences. Financial stress and economic hardship are linked to increased physical pain, lowered pain tolerance, and risk of coronary heart disease.³

By aligning funding to improve the conditions of housing units and to reinforce workforce development efforts, SB 296 can positively influence two significant drivers of health.

¹ The surgeon general's call to action to promote healthy homes - NCBI ... (n.d.). Retrieved from www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK44192/

² Taylor, L. (2018). Housing and Health: An Overview of the Literature. Health Affairs. Retrieved from: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20180313.396577/>.

³ Weida, E. B., Phojanakong, P., Patel, F., & Chilton, M. (n.d.). Financial Health as a measurable social determinant of health. PLOS ONE. Retrieved from journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0233359

For these reasons, we request a favorable report on SB 296.

For more information, please contact:
Brian Sims, Vice President, Quality & Equity
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SB0296 Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023 FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR SB0296

Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

Bill Sponsor: Senator McKay

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0296 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Marylanders are very well aware of the cost that climate change will exact as it becomes more intense. We, with the help of the General Assembly, have passed the most impactful legislation to mitigate the impacts of climate change. There is much more to be done, but one of the most important aspects of addressing climate change is ensuring that people have the tools and the incentives to do what needs to be done.

We need homeowners to decarbonize in order to address a major driver of greenhouse gases. For low-income residents, this process is not straightforward. Many homeowners require fixes to the structural aspects of their residence before they can decarbonize. Roof repair, water leaks, mold remediation and other structural concerns must be addressed first before a property can be weatherized or benefit from energy efficiency or other upgrades like solar panels.

While there are a number of state and federal programs that fund weatherization, some health and safety repairs, and energy efficiency upgrades, there is a gap in the kinds of funds that are required to help low-income residents decarbonize. The bill will create a Whole-Home Repairs Program (Program) within the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to provide grants to local agencies for repairs to owner-occupied homes and small landlord rentals units to ensure they are free of structural and other concerns that will impact the decarbonization process. Additionally, the bill will create a Whole-Home Repairs Fund (Fund) to support the grant program, improve coordination across home repair programs, and increase retention in workforce development programs. The Fund will consist of appropriated state dollars, federal funds, and other funds for the benefit of the Program.

This is a common-sense approach to a problem that needs to be solved. We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

SB0296-EEE_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 296

Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: February 14, 2023

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 296. This bill would incentivize owner-occupied units and small private landlords to keep their rental units free of habitability concerns, energy and water efficient, and accessible to individuals with disabilities.

The economic reverberations from the COVID-19 pandemic are still felt in nearly all parts of the economy, but nowhere more so than in the housing market. Due to a variety of historic and economic factors, the production and preservation of affordable housing stock has lagged behind the growth of our society. Today the cost of housing has become a significant line item in many household budgets, far exceeding the longtime standard of 30 percent of gross income.

SB 296 would help to address this preservation deficit by providing owner-occupied units and small landlords with the necessary resources to undertake expensive repairs. For small landlords, this program would lower or eliminate out-of-pocket costs for some repairs, lessening or eliminating the need for expensive rent increases. For owner-occupied units, the program has a similar impact, effectively creating a safety net for families in financially dire situations who cannot afford home repairs.

If enacted, SB 296 would provide a significant tool in preventing homelessness. By allocating resources to keep people in their homes and to preserve affordable housing, the program offers a novel approach targeting one part of the pervasive housing crisis. For this reason, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 296 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

SB 296 - MoCo_Fitzgerald_FAV (GA 23).pdf

Uploaded by: Garrett Fitzgerald

Position: FAV



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

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SB 296

DATE: February 13, 2023

SPONSOR: Senator McKay

ASSIGNED TO: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

CONTACT PERSON: Garrett Fitzgerald (garrett.fitzgerald@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: Favorable (Department of Environmental Protection)

Housing and Community Development – Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

This bill will establish a Whole-Home Repairs Program within the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to help ensure owner-occupied and rental units are free of habitability concerns; improve coordination across home repair programs; and increase retention in workforce development programs. The program will allow local administering agencies in each county to utilize grants provided by the program to:

1. Provide financial assistance to residential property owners to address habitability concerns; improve energy or water efficiency; and make units accessible for individuals with disabilities.
2. Invest in workforce development programs that will support trainees and connect them to jobs related to improving habitability and performance of residential properties.
3. Offset the costs of administering the program in coordination with related programs.

This bill has the potential to benefit thousands of Maryland families. It will strengthen our communities by helping families to stay in their homes with lower energy bills and potentially lower healthcare costs. It will enable property owners to access funding to make critical repairs, and in doing so will enable many more families to take advantage of DHCD's existing programs.

Weatherization helps residents by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes, lowering energy bills and improving comfort while ensuring health and safety. We understand from DHCD staff that each year between 35 and 50 percent of the families who apply for weatherization assistance through DHCD are denied support until critical and often costly repairs are made to their properties – repairs these families often cannot afford to make. This bill will help more families to complete those repairs and receive the benefits of weatherization.

We respectfully request that the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 296.

SB 0296 - Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Kenneth Phelps, Jr.

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0296

Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

FAVORABLE

TO: Senator Brian Feldman, Chair, Senator Cheryl Kagan and members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Rev. Kenneth Phelps, Jr., Co-Director, Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network

DATE: February 14, 2023

The Episcopal Church supports all initiatives that follow the Biblical call to become Beloved Community, which includes taking action to ensure that all of God's children have good, safe, and dignified places to live and thrive. Along with healthcare and education, we believe that safe, livable and affordable housing is a human right. We also realize that to meet its ambitious goals to reduce greenhouse gases, that Maryland will need to repair hundreds of thousands of homes occupied by low and middle-income people in order to meet its climate goals – we believe a healthy environment is also a human right. When Maryland passed the Climate Solutions Now Act last year, it set a goal of a 60% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2031. The reduction is to be accomplished in part by moving homes from fossil fuels to electricity.

The report from a group of environmental organizations stated Maryland will not be able to meet those goals without prioritizing repairs and upgrades to the state's 450,000 low-income homes. The study recommended the state take advantage of federal grants from the recent Inflation Reduction Act and infrastructure bill. This bill will establish the means by which low and middle income home-owners – and landlords - will be able to afford necessary repairs to their dwellings which otherwise would have likely been beyond their ability to afford. Those repairs will enable residents to qualify for energy efficiency improvements. And, in the long run, those improvements will save the state money by reducing the amount of energy bill assistance needed. Everyone wins.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a Favorable report

SB0296_Whole Home Retrofit Program_Educ Energy Env

Uploaded by: Laurie McGilvray

Position: FAV



Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Testimony on: SB0296 Housing and Community Development – Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023
Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing
Person Submitting: Laurie McGilvray, Co-Chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 14, 2023

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB296. The Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing is a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and environmental advocacy organizations focused on climate justice.

We urge you to vote favorably for SB296. The bill will create a Whole-Home Repairs Program (Program) to provide grants for repairs to low-income, owner-occupied homes and loans for small landlord rental units to address habitability concerns. The bill will create a Whole-Home Repairs Fund (Fund) to support the grant and loan programs, improve coordination across home repair programs, and increase retention in workforce development programs. The Fund will consist of appropriated state dollars, federal funds, and other funds that benefit the Program.

While there are several state and federal programs that fund weatherization, health and safety repairs, and energy efficiency upgrades, Maryland has no wholistic approach to covering all the repair needs of a property, especially for habitability concerns such as roof repairs, water leaks, or other structural issues. These issues must be addressed first, before a property can be sealed and insulated, get efficiency upgrades (e.g., heating/cooling systems), or have solar panels installed.

SB296 is intended to fill this gap. It will provide a key tool to address the Maryland Commission on Climate Change’s recommendation to “retrofit 100% of low-income households by 2030.” The 2021 *Building Energy Transition Plan* recommended that the state provide funding to DHCD, the Maryland Energy Administration, and local governments and organizations to offer little-to-no upfront cost comprehensive low-income home retrofits, including dedicated funds to address safety and health and electrical upgrades needed before weatherization, energy efficiency, and electrification projects can be completed. A focus on low-income households is

critical, because these households currently have a disproportionately high energy burden which will only increase as gas rates rise.

We also would support any amendments by the sponsor which would promote energy efficiency and conversion from gas to electric appliances and heating and cooling systems. We urge a **FAVORABLE** vote for SB296.

SB296_MDSierraClub_fav 14Feb2023.pdf

Uploaded by: Mark Posner

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Testimony on: SB296 “Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023”
Position: Support
Hearing Date: February 14, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report on SB296. This legislation seeks to improve the manner in which state and federal funding is made available for whole-home repairs for low-income families.

Many low-income homes and apartments in Maryland need significant investment to be healthy and habitable. They often have lead paint, structural defects, inefficient or inoperable heating and cooling equipment, inadequate electrical service, and other health hazards. This results, among other things, in increased cases of asthma, falls for the elderly, and lead poisoning for youth.

In addition, most low-income housing units utilize inefficient gas appliances and HVAC (heating and air conditioning) systems, and lack structural measures to promote energy efficiency. This results in high energy burdens for low-income households (on average, they spend 12% of their income on energy versus 2% for the general population).¹ In 2021, the Maryland Commission on Climate Change called for electrifying all low-income homes by 2030 to significantly limit greenhouse gas emissions owing to the current widespread use of natural gas.²

A principal goal of SB296 is to coordinate existing state and federal programs that fund efforts to make low-income housing units habitable and healthy. The current multiplicity of grants and rebates can be daunting to apply for, which reduces their utility.

We also support the amendment filed by the sponsor of the cross-filed House bill (HB79, sponsored by Delegate Stewart) to expand the range of state and federal programs included in this coordination of home repair programs, so as to include programs that promote energy efficiency and shifting from gas to electric appliances and HVAC systems. We also support adding the addition of greenhouse gas reduction as a goal of the bill, which is another provision included in Delegate Stewart’s amendment.

For these reasons, the Maryland Sierra Club urges a favorable report on this bill.

Christopher Stix
Clean Energy Committee
stixchris@gmail.com

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

¹ Maryland Office of People’s Counsel, Maryland Low-Income Market Characterization Report - 2022 Report Update, September 2022, Table 2.1, https://opc.maryland.gov/Portals/0/Publications/Reports/Maryland%20Low-Income%20Market%20Characterization_September%202022%20final.

² Maryland Commission on Climate Change, 2021 Annual Report and Building Energy Transition Plan, page 8, <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/air/ClimateChange/MCCC/Pages/MCCCReports-Archive.aspx>.

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

2023 SB296 - Housing and Community Development - W

Uploaded by: Martha Nathanson

Position: FAV



CARE BRAVELY

SB296 – Housing and Community Development – Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee – February 14, 2023

Testimony of Martha D. Nathanson, Esq., Vice President, Government Relations and Community Development LifeBridge Health

Position: **SUPPORT**

I am writing in SUPPORT of SB296. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center; Levindale Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County, and; Grace Medical Center in Baltimore (formerly Bon Secours Hospital).

SB296 Establishes the Whole-Home Repairs Program in the Department of Housing and Community Development to provide grants to certain local administering agencies for the purposes of ensuring that owner-occupied and rental units are free of habitability concerns, improving coordination across home repairs programs, and increasing retention in workforce development programs; and establishing the Whole-Home Repairs Fund as a special, non-lapsing fund.

Maryland's older adult population continues to rise and its housing stock is insufficient. Housing Upgrades to Benefit Seniors (HUBS) and similar programs connect seniors to a network of Baltimore organizations with a shared mission of helping adult homeowners age in place. LifeBridge Health / Sinai Hospital is the only hospital-based HUBS site and provides additional services such as assessment and case management services that include not only home improvements but also referrals to other LifeBridge health-related services that many residents need to maintain or improve health status. Unsafe housing conditions often pose additional risks to homeowners, such as fires and building collapse, often resulting in additional injury to residents which may require them to seek medical care. By consolidating the efforts of multiple organizations, HUBS creates efficiencies in referral, intake, and application procedures. The HUBS initiative ensures that clients are matched with the correct services and eliminates redundancies so that a greater number of older adults can live in homes that are safe, healthy, and comfortable. A well-coordinated repair program on the state level would be a great tool for networks throughout the state.

For all the above stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for SB296.

Contact: Martha D. Nathanson, Esq.
Vice President, Government Relations & Community Development
mnathans@lifebridgehealth.org
Mobile: 443-286-4812

Economic Action Maryland_SB296_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Donnelly

Position: FAV

Testimony to the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB296: Housing and Community Development – Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023
Position: Favorable

February 14, 2023

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
cc: Members, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Honorable Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

Economic Action Maryland is a nonprofit organization that works statewide to advance economic justice and equity through direct-service, research, and advocacy.

We are writing in support of Senate Bill 296.

Our Tenant Advocacy program assists renters and property owners with housing issues. We provide information and referrals to other agencies and organizations when necessary. Through our daily work we see the profound negative impacts Marylanders face because of our state's lack of safe, affordable housing.

Maryland's Department of Housing and Community Development published its Housing Needs Assessment in 2020. The report noted a worsening shortage of affordable and available housing, particularly for "extremely low-income households" that earn 30% or less than the area median income (AMI). At that point in time, for every 100 households at or below this threshold, there were only 33 homes available.¹

But the situation has only gotten worse since 2020. Moody's Analytics recently reported that the United States is now "rent-burdened" nationwide for the first time. This means the average ratio of rent to household income has risen above 30%. Households are increasingly priced out of homeownership and nationwide multifamily vacancy rates remain steady, driving housing costs to unprecedented highs. In the 4th quarter of 2022, the national average for monthly rent payments rose above \$1,700 per unit for the first time, 20.6% higher than the pre-pandemic average.^{2 3}

¹ <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Documents/Other%20Publications/Report.pdf>

² <https://cre.moodyanalytics.com/insights/market-insights/q4-2022-housing-affordability-update/>

³ <https://cre.moodyanalytics.com/insights/cre-trends/q4-2022-preliminary-trend-announcement/>

This affordability crisis is driving evictions and displacing families. It leads households to settle for inadequate housing without enough space for the number of people living in a home. It also causes renters to live in unsafe condition when there isn't habitable and affordable housing available.

This crisis is complex and demands a multifaceted response. Senate Bill 296 provides one necessary solution. If enacted, SB 296 will provide funding to preserve Maryland's existing housing stock. While new affordable housing must be developed, preserving existing housing will expand habitable housing stock and incentivize necessary repairs to keep homes up to code.

For all these reasons, we support SB296 and respectfully request a favorable report.

Best,
Michael Donnelly
Tenant Advocacy Coordinator
Economic Action Maryland
2209 Maryland Ave, Baltimore, MD 21218

SB296 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Mike McKay

Position: FAV

MIKE MCKAY
Legislative District 1
Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties



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Judicial Proceedings Committee
Executive Nominations Committee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Senate Bill 296 – Housing and Community Development – Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

February 12, 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chairwoman Kagan, and members of the committee,

Across the Appalachian Region of Maryland, of which I proudly represent, we have a growing problem with blight, seniors not being able to age in their own homes, migration out of our area, and the inability to retain a workforce. This bill attempts to rectify these issues by making funds and grants available to local governments as well as non-government organizations. This will be tested through a pilot program.

The Appalachian Region of Maryland has a growing population of seniors who cannot take care of their own homes as they age. This leads to them having to leave their own homes for nursing communities. Their homes can fall into disrepair and are left to rot away with no one investing in them. This also leads to a large amount of emigration from the area which, in turn, means that there is a lack of a workforce in the area. Our region relies upon small businesses and the workforce already in place. Without a workforce, businesses will close, and my region will suffer.

SB 296 intends to solve these issues. Not only will it help with workforce retention, but it has the potential to add jobs for contractors in taking care of the blight issues around my area and potentially

others around the State should this go into full effect. It also will help seniors age in place, no longer having to leave their homes for somewhere that is unfamiliar and less comfortable.

Thank you very much and I ask for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Senator Mike McKay

Representing the Appalachia Region of Maryland

Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties

SB0296-EEE-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FAV



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB 296

February 14, 2023

TO: Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 0296 – Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

POSITION: Support

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 296.

SB 296 would establish the Whole-Home Repairs Program in the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to provide grants to certain local administering agencies for the purposes of ensuring that owner-occupied and rental units are free of habitability concerns, improving coordination across home repairs programs, and increasing retention in workforce development programs.

SB 296 would enhance our ability to support and retain tenants, homeowners and future homeowners in Baltimore City by providing additional fiscal support for programs that we currently administer such as the Weatherization Assistance Program, Community Development Block Grants, Lead Hazard Reduction Grants and support of the Maryland Housing Rehabilitation Program and other neighborhood revitalization programs.

Baltimore City currently administers programs to address habitability concerns, improve energy efficiency and make units accessible for individuals with disabilities. Should SB 296 be enacted it would increase our staffing needs due to the anticipated increased program participation; however, the administrative framework is already in place to effectively deliver these programs and services and may be able to help address a significant back log.

SB 296 would also be beneficial in that small landlords have often sought assistance that we presently have no ability to provide. This bill is reflective of the needs that have been expressed from the landlord, tenant and homeowner communities.

Currently Baltimore City's LIGHT Intake & Assessment Unit is responsible for the application processing on these cases. There would need to be additional staff in place to handle the increased volume of applications. In addition, both the field teams of the Weatherization and Rehabilitation Services Staff would need to be increased to complete the grant agreements as well as to complete the scopes of work. Additional staffing would be required including Construction Building Inspector II's, a Construction Project Supervisor for the Team and a Social Services Coordinator Supervisor.

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<https://mogr.baltimorecity.gov/>*

In a typical, non-COVID year, Baltimore City’s staff of 13 serves about 211 constituents using approximately \$2.2m in combined Federal, State and City capital funding. A typical case load for a Rehabilitation Technician (project manager/field staff) is approximately 30-45 cases at any given time at different stages in our case matriculation process. Baltimore City DHCD has 6 Rehabilitation Technicians and one supervisor that directly address constituent housing repairs. A typical case load for an underwriter is approximately 25-35 cases at any given time. Baltimore City DHCD has 2 underwriters on staff.

Fiscal Impact based on and average grant of \$25,000

Administration-Parking Stickers	\$ 525.00
Administration-Housing Building Inspector III	\$ 81,000.00
Administration-Housing Building Inspector II	\$ 73,000.00
Administration-Housing Building Inspector II	\$ 73,000.00
Administration-Real Estate Agent II	\$ 121,000.00
Administration- Sr. Social Services Coordinator Supervisor	\$ 121,000.00
Administration- Sr. Social Services Coordinator	\$ 70,000.00
Administration-Energy Technician II	\$ 64,000.00
Administration-Office Support Specialist III	\$ 57,000.00
Administration--Construction Project Supervisor I	\$ 127,000.00
Administration-Laptops	\$ 10,000.00
Administration-iPads	\$ 3,000.00
Administration-cellphones	\$ 3,600.00
Administration-Database License	\$ 5,600.00
Administration-Payments to Contractors	\$ 2,500,000.00
Total Estimate	\$ 3,309,725.00

The passage of SB 296 would have an impact on Baltimore City operations but increases our ability to serve landlord, tenant and homeowner communities. Should Baltimore City choose to apply for these grants the administration would work towards addressing the operational impact.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report on SB 296.

GHHI Written Testimony - SB296.pdf

Uploaded by: Wesley Stewart

Position: FAV



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February 13, 2023

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **SUPPORT** – SB296 – Housing and Community Development – Whole Home Repairs Act of 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI), I offer this testimony in support of SB296 that will transform low income housing service delivery in Maryland. GHHI is a member of Energy Efficient Maryland and I represent GHHI as a member of the EPA Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee, the CDC Lead Exposure and Prevention Advisory Committee, the Maryland Public Health Association Advisory Committee and as Chair of the Maryland Lead Poisoning Prevention Commission. GHHI is dedicated to addressing the social determinants of health and advancing racial and health equity through the creation of healthy, safe and energy efficient homes. GHHI has been at the frontline of holistic healthy housing for three decades.

GHHI created the holistic health, housing and energy efficiency service delivery model that is implemented in our nationally recognized, Maryland-based direct services program in Baltimore City. In addition, GHHI has helped to elevate Maryland as a national leader in healthy housing by helping reduce childhood lead poisoning by 99% in the state and helping support over 45 pieces of healthy housing legislation that have become law in the State of Maryland and local jurisdictions. By delivering a standard of excellence, GHHI aims to eradicate the negative health impacts of unhealthy housing and unjust policies to ensure better health, economic, and social outcomes for children, seniors and families with an emphasis on communities of color.

Whole Home Program Model

In 2010, in partnership with HUD, CDC, the Council on Foundations and the White House Office of Recovery Implementation, GHHI developed and launched a multi-city national initiative to integrate and leverage lead hazard reduction, healthy homes and weatherization housing intervention services through an innovative whole house model. GHHI's holistic housing intervention approach is now recognized and promoted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development across the country as a model for effective coordination of federal and local lead, healthy homes and weatherization program resources. Through SB296, Maryland would join Pennsylvania as national leaders in addressing substandard conditions in low income communities through an innovative, holistic model in its state housing programs. By coordinating housing, energy and health program resources, low income families and seniors will have improved service delivery, reduced deferral rates from weatherization and lead remediation



Program services they would be eligible to receive, and see improved health outcomes, reduced energy costs and increased housing stability.

Existing programs funded through the state can be impactful, but they are not well coordinated across agencies and programs, and insufficiently address the multiple health, safety, energy and housing rehabilitation needs that exist in occupied, low income housing in the state. Housing is a major social determinant of health and one of the most important ways that communities build wealth. Lead poisoning affects children's developing brains and nervous systems, causing reduced IQ, learning disabilities, and behavioral problems with impacts lasting into adulthood. Pests, mold and poor indoor air quality can trigger asthma episodes which nationally is the most widespread chronic health issue affecting children and is responsible for 14.4 million missed days of school and 14.2 million missed days of work. Over 500,000 children and adults in Maryland have been diagnosed with asthma. Other hazards such as asbestos, radon, household safety and injury risks and lack of heating or cooling prevent residents from staying healthy, create unaffordable energy burdens for households, and reduce property values.

Many Marylanders lack the resources to address these conditions in their homes without financial assistance. With the age and deteriorated condition of significant parts of Maryland's low income housing stock, the need for housing interventions often exceeds the capacity of a single program. Funding available through federal housing programs such as the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) have limited funding to address the health and safety issues (lead paint, mold, asbestos or roofing repair) that are commonly found in the oldest and highest-need housing. As result, homes are often deferred from weatherization services and remain energy inefficient. The state's efforts to implement electrification and decarbonization measures will also be thwarted by homes that are deferred due to structural repairs, water infiltration or lead hazards. Low income communities of color are disproportionately exposed to the harms of inadequate housing at higher rates due to a history of disinvestment in minority communities as well as larger inequalities in resources that often lead to deferred maintenance of homes.

Comprehensive programs that integrate resources through a coordinated process as proposed in SB296 can dramatically change the life trajectory of children and create safe and stable housing for families and seniors in disinvested neighborhoods. This program can raise the quality of life state-wide by reducing the need to address health, energy, and economic crises that result from living in substandard housing. By integrating funding sources and increasing funding to address gaps in the existing state-wide programs, the Whole Home Program can be utilized at a scale to make an incredible impact on the lives of residents. At the Green & Health Homes Initiative, we have developed and advocated for the whole-home model and have found great success in partnership with Baltimore City DHCD in addressing housing issues comprehensively in our current programs in Baltimore. Doing so reduces the burdens on households as well as programs through cross trained assessors and contractors. As a result, more homes are served with a higher quality of intervention and with fewer contractors and disruptions for the client.

The creation of the Whole Home Repair Fund will enable Maryland DHCD to braid cross sector funding sources while more effectively pursuing the numerous opportunities that exist to

substantially increase federal, philanthropic and private sector investments in the state and its housing stock. By utilizing the Whole Home Repair Program model and obtaining new funding for the Repair Fund, DHCD and partnering agencies will coordinate funding more efficiently and dedicate additional resources to eliminating the barriers limiting the impact of the existing home repair efforts. The Whole Home Repair Program will set the state on a path to sustainability for housing, energy and the environment as well as socially with improvements in the health, education and financial stability of families.

Other Jurisdictions Passing Whole Home Legislation/Implementing Whole Home Models

- In 2022, the State of Pennsylvania passed the Whole Home Repairs Act that established a holistic Whole Home Repair Program model for housing intervention services in Pennsylvania and allocated \$125 million in funding to address gaps and to conduct holistic interventions.
- In New Jersey, the Governor’s Office and the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, with technical support from GHHI, have launched a Whole House Pilot Program to align energy efficiency, lead hazard reduction and healthy homes services through a comprehensive process.

Benefits of Whole Home Model

From our own work and through research on evidence-based practices nationally, GHHI has found that a healthy and energy efficient home yields a multitude of energy and non-energy benefits for residents, particularly low income residents who can benefit the most from hazard remediation and energy efficiency improvements in terms of economic mobility, housing stability and wealth retention over the long-term. Benefits of the Maryland Whole Home Model for low income clients in Baltimore City who received holistic interventions by GHHI:

Health, Housing, Energy and Social Outcomes

- 66% reduction in asthma related hospitalizations
- 62% increase in asthma related perfect school attendance
- 88% increase in parents never missing work due to their child’s asthma episodes
- Reductions in asthma related ER visits and improved school performance
- Reductions in childhood lead poisoning and health disparities
- Reductions in household injuries for children and trip and fall injuries for seniors
- Increased mobility and accessibility in the home for older adults who are able to Age in Place in the homes and communities where they choose to live
- Reductions in greenhouse gas emissions

Cost savings and System Change

- Improved service delivery to low income households and reductions in deferral rates from housing program services that clients are otherwise eligible to receive
- Program and government cost savings from efficiencies in implementing comprehensive assessment and housing intervention models utilizing cross-trained assessors and contractors
- Government innovation through the utilization of an integrated, comprehensive housing intervention model by state agencies that attracts new federal and philanthropic investment
- Reductions in medical costs including Medicaid costs
- Reductions in energy consumption and energy costs
- Reductions in housing maintenance costs

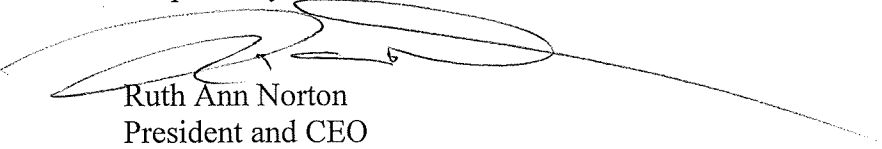
GHHI SB296 Amendments

GHHI offers and supports the following friendly amendments for consideration by the Committee:

1. Revise “affordable units” income definition (page 2, line 24) and the grant eligibility income criteria (page 6, line 6) to $\leq 80\%$ AMI.
2. Reduce the period for small landlords to qualify for the forgivable loan from 15 years to 5 years. (Page 2, line 21)
3. Add clarifying language that the \$50,000 per unit cap on grant funding may be exceeded for projects involving eminent health and safety related program costs as part of the braided funding mechanism so that homes with more substantial hazards can receive the full housing services needed. (Pages 6, line 27)
4. Insert a description of additional critical elements of the Whole Home Repairs Program model that need to be implemented by DHCD in order to be an effective Program (Page 4, line 2):
 - Provide a single portal client intake process and enhanced application assistance
 - Conduct a comprehensive environmental assessment and energy audit of every home
 - Complete comprehensive housing interventions through an integrated process
5. Include priorities for funding by the Whole Home Program to properties where children with elevated blood lead levels or children with diagnosed asthma reside. (Page 6, line 28)
6. Include energy and health outcomes metrics in the Program’s annual report: (Page 7, line 2)
 - Reductions in energy consumption and energy costs for units pre and post intervention
 - Improvements in health outcomes for occupants pre and post intervention (lead poisoning, asthma episodes, household injury)
7. Align program fund usage with state climate goals:
 - Include reducing greenhouse gas emissions to purposes of program grants (page 5, line 2)
 - Require that financial assistance provided under the Program may not be used to finance the purchase of gas equipment (4-2903)

GHHI is deeply committed to advancing racial and health equity, economic mobility and climate resiliency through improved housing standards for low income housing. SB296 will improve health outcomes, reduce energy burdens and improve housing service delivery for Maryland’s low income residents. Maryland’s children, families, seniors and workers will all substantially benefit from more effective and coordinated housing intervention programs. Lastly, in order to support our state’s new, ambitious climate goals through electrification and renewable energy technologies in homes, we have to prepare and repair our housing stock through the use of this comprehensive housing model. We request a favorable report on SB296.

Respectfully Submitted,



Ruth Ann Norton
President and CEO

SB 296 - FWA - MML.pdf

Uploaded by: Angelica Bailey

Position: FWA



Maryland Municipal League

The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

February 14, 2023

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Bill: _____ SB 296 - Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

Position: Support with Amendment

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League supports Senate Bill 296, which helps local governments improve housing security for our residents with the help of a new fund through the Department of Housing and Community Development. The Whole-Home Repairs Fund is designed to aid residential habitability and increase workforce development. While many municipalities don't have housing departments or housing repairs programs, those that do will have the opportunity to apply for funds to help residents improve their homes and generate new jobs. This is a laudable goal and MML appreciates the Sponsors' intent.

However, the current draft limits funding to one municipality per county. This seems like an unnecessary and unfair restriction, especially for a county like Prince George's which has 27 municipalities and significant housing shortages.

As such, the League respectfully requests that this committee adopt the amendment and provide SB 296 with a favorable report.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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SB 296 - Whole Home Repair - FWA - REALTORS.pdf

Uploaded by: Lisa May

Position: FWA



Senate Bill 296 – Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

Position: Support with Amendment

Maryland REALTORS® offers its support for Senate Bill 296, which establishes the Whole-Home Repair fund to increase housing conditions for lower-income Maryland residents.

REALTORS® greatly appreciate the inclusion of small rental housing providers in this program. Many of the rental housing registration and inspection programs which have been established and the county and municipal levels are due to code compliance concerns. When those programs are enacted, there is always a concern about how independent landlords, who do not have access to the capital as larger property management companies, will be able to afford or finance any necessary repairs to their rental units.

This bill provides both loan and grant options for those landlords to raise the level of habitability in their units. However, our members have expressed some concern on the ability of independent landlords to meet the requirements currently outlined for loan forgiveness. Those include a 15-year lookback period on both annual rent increases and timeframes for past violation corrections.

REALTORS® would encourage as much flexibility be given to landlords to have their loans forgiven under this program, especially since it is ultimately their tenants who benefit from the improvements made to their units. Most of our landlords indicate that they would be able to meet a 5-year evaluation of rental rates, as detailed rent logs are often not kept beyond that time. At a minimum, state and local agencies should closely review the annual reports on the number of landlords who had their loans forgiven and adjust program parameters if necessary.

With consideration for the outlined limitations on loan forgiveness for small landlords, Maryland REALTORS® asks for your support of Senate Bill 296.

**For more information contact
lisa.may@mdrealtor.org or christa.mcgee@mdrealtor.org**

OPC Testimony SB0296.pdf

Uploaded by: Mollie Soloway

Position: FWA

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BRANDI NIELAND
DIRECTOR, CONSUMER
ASSISTANCE UNIT

BILL NO.: S.B. 296 - Housing and Community Development –
Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

HEARING DATE: February 14, 2023

SPONSOR: Senator McKay

POSITION: Favorable with amendment

The Office of People's Counsel (OPC) supports Senate Bill 296 with an amendment. By making additional funding available for energy efficiency, SB296 will improve habitability, lower utility bills, decrease customer reliance on an increasingly costly gas system, and help prepare Maryland's housing stock to achieve the State's GHG reduction goals.

The bill would create a Whole Home Repairs Program to, among other things, (1) ensure owner-occupied and rental units are free of habitability concerns, and (2) improve coordination across home repair programs. Under the new law, local administering agencies would use grant funds provided by the Department of Housing and Community Development to provide financial assistance, not to exceed \$50,000 per unit, to residential property owners for the purpose of "(i) addressing habitability concerns; (ii) improving energy or water efficiency; and (iii) making units accessible for individuals with disabilities."

OPC supports this whole-home approach as well as the bill's intent to improve coordination of funding across agencies and programs. As the advocate for residential utility customers, OPC particularly supports the provision of additional financing for energy efficiency. The General Assembly has previously observed that "energy efficiency is among the least expensive ways to meet the growing electricity demands of the State." Md. Code Ann. Pub. Util. § 7-211(b). Energy efficiency is also among the

least expensive ways to support the State’s ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals.

Energy efficiency repairs also benefit residential customers by helping to lower utility bills over the long term. Yet, the upfront cost of completing such repairs can be a deterrent. Certain rebates and benefits are available through the utility-customer funded EmPOWER program, but the State cannot rely on utility customers alone to finance the energy efficiency needs that are necessitated by the State’s climate goals. Financing efficiency measures through rates is regressive—since utility customers pay the same rates regardless of income—compared to financing measures through grants. Grant funding, such as that proposed in SB 296, thus provides an important additional mechanism for financing State energy policy.

OPC is also concerned that any qualifying repairs are done in a way that furthers the long-term interests of utility customers as well as the State’s ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals. Customer interests and climate goals are mutually advanced by aligning the program with the State’s policy preference for converting buildings to electricity. OPC’s studies¹ show that it is not in customers’ interests to acquire gas equipment, with gas rates rising as a result of increasing distribution costs—setting aside the fuel price volatility affecting customers this winter.

To this end, OPC supports proposed amendments to include “reducing greenhouse gas emissions” among the qualifying purposes for repairs. OPC respectfully requests that the Committee also include an additional amendment to expressly prevent these funds from being used to finance gas appliances. Specifically, OPC requests that the following language be inserted into section 4-2903:

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED UNDER SUBSECTION C(1) OF THIS SECTION MAY NOT BE USED TO FINANCE THE PURCHASE OF GAS EQUIPMENT.

With this amendment, SB 296 is poised to benefit residents not only by improving habitability and lowering utility bills but also by decreasing customer reliance on an increasingly costly gas system. Moreover, by preparing our housing stock for electrification and renewable energy technologies, SB 296 can help achieve the State’s GHG reduction goals.

Recommendation: OPC requests a favorable report as amended for SB 296.

¹ See DHInfrastructure, *Maryland Gas Utility Spending: Projections and Analysis* (Oct. 2022), <https://opc.maryland.gov/Gas-Utility-Spending-Report>; Synapse Energy Economics, Inc., *Climate Policy for Maryland’s Gas Utilities: Financial Implications* (Nov. 2022), <https://opc.maryland.gov/Gas-Rates-Climate-Report>.

SB 296 HB 79 - Housing and Community Development -

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FWA



Bill: SB 296/HB 79 - Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

Position: Support w/ Amendment

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The City of Gaithersburg, a municipality of Montgomery County, with a population of almost 70,000 at the time of the 2020 Census is the third largest City in the State. The City recognizes the importance of addressing habitability concerns, improving energy or water efficiency, and making units accessible for individuals with disabilities to better our community.

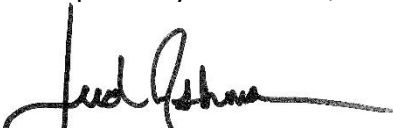
The City appreciates the willingness of the bill sponsor to amend the bill to ensure there are no barriers to municipalities seeking to apply to the Whole-Home Repair fund.

For these reasons, the City of Gaithersburg supports this bill with the **sponsor amendment to strike the language, beginning on line 22 “, providing that the municipal corporation is not served by another local administering agency”**.

For these reasons, we respectfully request your support.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 301-466-5350 or our government relations consultant, Sarah Peters, at speters@hbstrategies.us. We appreciate your support.

Respectfully submitted,



Jud Ashman, Mayor
City of Gaithersburg

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