



Testimony to the House Environment & Transportation Committee
HB1221: Baltimore East-West Corridor - Property Acquisition - Prohibiting
Involuntary Residential Displacement
Position: Favorable

March 2, 2023

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, HOB
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, Environment and Transportation Committee

Honorable Chair Barve and Members of the Committee:

Economic Action Maryland (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) is a people-centered movement to expand economic rights, housing justice, and community reinvestment for working families, low-income communities, and communities of color. Economic Action Maryland provides direct assistance today while passing legislation and regulations to create systemic change in the future.

We are writing today in strong support of HB1221.

HB 1221 is a simple bill addressing a critical issue-involuntary residential displacement. HB 1221 prohibits the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) from using eminent domain to acquire property for the Red Line if the acquisition would result in involuntary displacement of residents.

The use of eminent domain for urban renewal including the creation of highways, transit, and new construction has disproportionately displaced residents in majority Black neighborhoods. A 2020 [report](#) found that in Minneapolis, 29% of those displaced by urban renewal were families of color, although they comprised only 3% of the city's population. In Louisville, 48% of those displaced were families of color, although they made up only 18% of the city's population.

In Baltimore, my organization Economic Action Maryland has just filed an administrative complaint against Baltimore City for violations of the Fair Housing Act charging that its use of eminent domain in the Poppleton community has led to increased segregation of families in the majority Black community. In Poppleton, 134 of 167 households that were displaced by eminent domain were Black households.

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In Baltimore, as in the other communities, those families that were displaced moved to areas that were more segregated with fewer amenities.

The Red Line is an important connection for Baltimore residents without a car, particularly those in majority Black neighborhoods who travel long distances to reach employment. However, the construction of the Red Line and its effect of connecting communities should not be done by displacing homeowners and tenants in Baltimore neighborhoods.

For all these reasons, we support HB 1221 and urge a favorable report.

Best,

Marceline White
Executive Director

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