



Testimony HB 852
House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 28, 2023
Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland's community development sector and serves nearly 180 member organizations. CDN—focuses on small affordable housing developers, housing counseling agencies and community-based non-profits across the state of Maryland. The mission of CDN is to promote, strengthen and advocate for the community development sector throughout Maryland's urban, suburban and rural communities. CDN envisions a state in which all communities are thriving and where people of all incomes have abundant opportunities for themselves and their families.

HB 852 – ensures that any affordable housing project with a house of worship as a partner would be eligible for the same expedited process review as any other eligible project.

Because projects on property held by a house of worship are subject to the same costs of development, the same challenges of review and standards as other projects, CDN expects that religious organizations will meet or exceed the same affordability standards as their peers in expedited review processes.

According to the Maryland Housing Needs Assessment that was completed in 2021 by the National Center for Smart Growth and Enterprise Community Partners, Maryland will have to make a significant investment in housing over the next 10 years in order to keep up with economic and demographic shifts in the state. The analysis showed that the state is short 85,000 rental units for low-income households. With Maryland expected to add an estimated 97,166 low-income households by 2030, the shortage will worsen unless the state creates and preserves many more affordable homes. Thirteen of the state's 23 counties and Baltimore City don't have enough housing that's affordable to very low-income renters. The deficit is largest in Montgomery County, followed by Baltimore.

At a time when communities throughout the state need quality, affordable housing at historic levels, more religious organizations with land are considering leveraging their properties as a way to help meet their mission and support community members in this way. Having equal access to any considerations at the local jurisdiction level, such as an expedited review process, affords more resources that can be invested back into the project itself, and supports bringing needed affordable housing homes to a community as quickly as possible.

We ask your favorable report for HB 852.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director