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**STATEMENT**  
**REGARDING HOUSE BILL 0561**  
**TOWN OF MOUNT AIRY – URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

The Honorable Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee,

The Town of Mount Airy is seeking the same Urban Renewal Authority that has been granted to 69 other Maryland municipalities over the past 50 years, Williamsport and Hancock last year. The Town of Mount Airy views this legislation as likely not to be used in the near future but would be a tool to be added to its toolbox in the event it was needed.

In Mount Airy, as in other jurisdictions, absentee landlords have properties that have been vacant, abandoned, vandalized and are a blight on the community. Urban Renewal Authority could be used to bring a blighted property owner to the table in order to create a meaningful dialogue on the future of their site. Currently, the requests of the Town to discuss these properties have been ignored for years and in some cases decades.

The content of the requested legislation is only applicable within the confines of the corporate limits of the Town of Mount Airy. The Mayor and Town Council are seeking the Committee's assistance in their attempt to improve the Town of Mount Airy and thus the region by an acquiring this enabling legislation.

The Urban Renewal Authority of House Bill 0561 contains numerous policies and procedures which must be followed. An Urban Renewal Plan must be developed and submitted to the governing body for consideration. The Plan should include, but not be limited to, properties identified as blighted, abandoned, in disrepair or dangerous. After public hearings, review by the local Planning Commission and formal adoption by Resolution, then the staff will be authorized to approach the property owners.

The Town of Mount Airy needs this legislation to allow it to work in a meaningful way to convince owners of blighted properties that are impacting neighborhoods and business communities to engage the Town to find solutions to their property issues. Article III Section 61 of the Maryland Constitution requires municipalities to have this authority conferred to it by the General Assembly, as previously noted.

Therefore, the residents and elected officials of the Town of Mount Airy respectfully request your affirmative vote on HB 0561.