



30 January, 2023

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

**Re: Letter of Support for Senate Bill 0144**  
Public Utilities – Energy Efficiency and Conservation Programs – Energy Performance Targets and  
Low-Income Housing

Dear Chair Feldman and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

We are writing to offer AIA Maryland's support for Senate Bill 0144, requiring the state DHCD to provide green, energy efficiency and conservation programs designed to achieve incremental gross energy savings, particularly for low-income housing. This bill is critical for enhancing the lives of low-income residents in the state of Maryland. Existing programs like EmPOWER Maryland and the Multifamily Energy Efficiency and Housing Affordability Program (MEEHA) are so important to developers and operators of low-income housing. These programs make quality, sustainable affordable housing projects happen and are critical to fueling additional development of affordable housing in our state. The energy retrofits these programs help to fund, support meeting the aggressive requirements for energy savings that are necessary to combat climate change. In addition to energy savings, residents can realize significant savings with utility bills; savings that can instead go towards other things to improve the lives of low-income families. We know that many of these families are cost burdened, paying from 1/3 to over 1/2 of their income to rent and reducing that burden is significant.

Weatherization, health safety and other general maintenance strategies help improve the public health of the state's residents, ensuring better indoor air quality in the home which can lead to less sick days from school or work and has proven to reduce incidents of asthma. This bill outlines a great plan for accountability and reporting on the efforts being made across the state so we can study and realize the true benefits of energy retrofits. AIA MD is keen to see these energy retrofits implemented in low-income housing that will result in balancing the inequity for the many who are less well off. Further, this bill supports positive impact for the state in areas of development, health, and economy. Further this bill supports small business targeting those that pay 150% of the State minimum wage, another practice to help those who earn less.

AIA Maryland represents almost 2,000 Architects throughout the state. Our members conduct research, advocate for, and successfully work on affordable housing projects. Our architect and allied members have a wealth of knowledge regarding the design and construction of energy retrofit strategies. As such, we recommend that you include one architect member of the Green and Healthy Task Force that is outlined in this bill. We believe that someone who designs or builds affordable housing and is familiar with the practical implementation of energy efficiency measures may prove to be a huge benefit to the group. Adding creative minds to the Task Force who work on design and physically implementing these green and energy retrofits to our housing stock can help identify ways to implement measures for efficiency and effectiveness. Please consider adding this recommendation to the bill in future drafts, as we believe it will yield a great benefit to the program.

We encourage you to vote in favor of this legislation and encourage Maryland's continued commitment and investment in supporting legislation that benefits affordable housing. Thank you for your consideration and your vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'L. Frank', is placed over the typed name and title.

Laurence A. Frank, AIA  
Past President and Director, AIA Maryland