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The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chairman
Budget and Taxation
3W Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Guzzone:

On behalf of the University of Maryland, Baltimore, I would like to express my strong support for ***SB 90 - Community Development Administration – Live Near Your School Program – Funding and Extension***. The University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) Live Near Your Work (LNYW) Program is a home buying assistance benefit for University employees that offers money toward the down payment and closing costs of homes in select West Baltimore neighborhoods, including the purchase of a home requiring major renovations.

Currently, the program offers UMB employees assistance with down payments and closing costs on newly purchased homes in designated areas. UMB contributes \$16,000 per eligible participant as a commitment to its surrounding communities, while the city of Baltimore will offer a matching grant of up to \$2,500 for those who are eligible. To be eligible, applicants must be a regular full or part-time (at least half-time) faculty, staff, or postdoctoral fellow employee in good standing. Participants must contribute a minimum of \$1,000 toward the down payment, prove creditworthiness, and complete a homeownership counseling program.

From January 2018 through December 2023, the program has helped 71 employees to purchase homes in the eligible neighborhoods in Southwest/West Baltimore. The average purchase price has been \$191,500.

The seven neighborhoods that were part of UMB's Live Near Your Work program initially were Barre Circle, Franklin Square, Hollins Market, Mount Clare, Pigtown/Washington Village, Poppleton, and Union Square. In June, 2020, the program capitalized on its success by expanding into three neighborhoods with historic significance: Druid Heights, Upton and Heritage Crossing. In December 2023, Harlem Park was added. This extends the LNYW benefit to a total of 11 southwest Baltimore neighborhoods.

We believe that funding properly a Live Near Your School program would complement our successful LNYW program at UMB. A LNYS program would encourage our students to help contribute to the revitalization of West Baltimore and the City of Baltimore.

We support passage of ***SB 90 - Community Development Administration – Live Near Your School Program – Funding and Extension***.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dawn M. Rhodes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "D".

Dawn M. Rhodes, MBA
Chief Business & Finance Officer and Vice President