

SB0067 - Property Tax Credit – Retail Service Station Conversions

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Letter of Support

To the Esteemed Senators of the Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB0067, "Property Tax Credit – Retail Service Station Conversions." This legislation is not only timely but also crucial in addressing two significant concerns associated with the presence of gas stations in our communities: their environmental impact and their criminogenic nature. By incentivizing the conversion of gas stations into more community-friendly and environmentally sustainable entities, SB0067 offers a proactive solution to reshape our urban landscapes for the better.

The support for SB0067, "Property Tax Credit – Retail Service Station Conversions," is significantly bolstered by the insights gleaned from recent scholarly research on the criminogenic nature of gas stations. Studies such as "[Crime Risk Stations: Examining Spatiotemporal Influence of Urban Features through Distance-Aware Risk Signal Functions](#)" and [related works](#) offer compelling evidence that gas stations act as focal points for criminal activities. These establishments, according to the findings, exhibit elevated risk intensity and strength for crimes during late-night hours and weekends. [This phenomenon is largely attributed to the convergence of motivated offenders and suitable targets in the absence of effective guardianship](#), a concept deeply rooted in routine activity and crime pattern theories. In light of these findings, it becomes clear that the presence of gas stations in urban areas, especially those grappling with socioeconomic challenges, contributes to an elevated crime risk, underscoring the need for strategic urban planning and law enforcement interventions.

Supporting SB0067 aligns with these research insights, presenting an opportunity to reduce the number of gas stations in our communities, thereby potentially lowering the associated criminogenic risks. This bill not only offers a pathway for transforming urban spaces by converting gas stations into more community-beneficial properties but also aligns with broader objectives of environmental sustainability and public safety

enhancement. The incentivization of converting gas stations into alternative, more beneficial uses through property tax credits is a proactive measure that addresses both the environmental concerns associated with fossil fuel dependency and the public safety issues underscored in the cited studies.

Additionally, gas stations, by their very nature and operation, pose substantial health risks due to the release of toxic chemicals into the environment. [Chronic exposure to benzene, a well-known component of gasoline, has been linked to numerous blood cancers, including acute myeloid leukemia and acute non-lymphocytic leukemia.](#) This risk is not just confined to gas station employees but extends to the wider community, [including residents and businesses in proximity to these stations.](#) The cumulative release of unburned fuel into the environment, though seemingly small on an individual level, is significant when considered in totality, particularly in densely populated metropolitan areas. Furthermore, the environmental impact of gas stations extends beyond air pollution. Liquid fuel spills and vapor emissions lead to soil and groundwater contamination, contributing to a broader spectrum of health risks. Runoff water contaminated with hydrocarbons from gas stations can carry these pollutants to natural water bodies, affecting both aquatic ecosystems and human health. The widespread distribution of gas stations, coupled with the intensive usage of vehicle fuel in industrialized nations, amplifies these risks.

In conclusion, SB0067 is a much-needed catalyst for positive change. By providing a property tax credit for the conversion of retail service stations, we can significantly reduce the environmental and safety concerns they present. This bill paves the way for Baltimore and other communities in Maryland to incentivize the transformation of these sites into beneficial, sustainable, and safe spaces. The passage of SB0067 will mark a significant stride towards our collective goal of fostering healthier, safer, and more environmentally responsible communities across Maryland.

I urge the Budget and Taxation Committee to recognize the multifaceted benefits of this bill and to lend it your full support.

Respectfully,

Isaac Leal