

**SB308\_JustCommunityDesignation\_LOS.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brian Sims

Position: FAV



Maryland  
Hospital Association

February 1, 2024

To: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Re: Letter of Support - Senate Bill 308 - Housing and Community Development - Just Community Designation

Dear Chair Feldman:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 62 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 308.

As part of MHA's [commitment to racial equity](#), Maryland hospitals are evaluating factors inside and outside of their organizations to promote equity and opportunities to address social determinants impacting Marylanders' health. We are working with members of our Health Equity Advisory Committee to identify partners and external opportunities to support these efforts. Hospitals embrace culturally responsive strategies to address disparities in health outcomes to ensure all Marylanders can be as healthy as possible.

SB 308 would establish the "Just Community" designation to actively improve health and social equity in communities that have been disproportionately affected by negative state, federal, and local policies. Undoing the effects of generations of disinvestment and unequal resources in communities around the state is critical for a comprehensive approach to bolster success on the state's population health and health equity strategies.

Maryland hospitals care for millions of people each year, around-the-clock. In addition to the care they provide, they continuously evaluate factors inside and outside of their organizations to promote the health and the well-being of the populations they serve and the tens of thousands they employ. Hospitals are committed to addressing the social drivers of health, which includes cross-sector collaboration and investments in the community.

Maryland is consistently identified as one of the richest states in the nation, with a median household income of approximately \$90,000—well above the national average.<sup>1</sup> However, the state also has the dubious distinction of having one of the highest rates of income inequality.

Marginalized communities in Maryland struggle with social and economic adversity. Access to educational opportunities, affordable housing, reliable transportation, healthy food, safe play spaces, and health care, are not equally distributed throughout the state. To fully address the

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<sup>1</sup> US News & World Report. Fitzgerald, Madeline. "The 10 Richest States in America." [usnews.com/news/best-states/slideshows/10-wealthiest-states-in-america?onpage](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/slideshows/10-wealthiest-states-in-america?onpage) (accessed Oct. 7, 2022)



systemic issues facing many of Maryland’s communities, and meaningfully improve the health of all Marylanders, issues beyond direct medical care must be considered.

Environmental, economic, and social factors influence health outcomes and contribute to health inequities.<sup>2</sup> The prioritization of communities that have been historically denied—whether intentionally or unintentionally—opportunities to access resources for success is critical to solve and to address adverse impacts to health-related systemic inequity.

For these reasons, we request a *favorable* report on SB 308.

For more information, please contact:  
Brian Sims, Vice President, Quality & Equity  
Bsims@mhaonline.org

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<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “NCHHSTP Social Determinants of Health (SDH) Frequently Asked Questions.” [cdc.gov/nchhstp/socialdeterminants/faq.html](https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/socialdeterminants/faq.html). (accessed February 17, 2023).

**SB308\_DHCD\_SUPPORT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Chuck Cook

Position: FAV

**DATE:** February 1, 2024

**BILL NO.:** Senate Bill 308

**TITLE:** Housing and Community Development - Just Community Designation

**COMMITTEE:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

### Letter of Support

#### **Description of Bill:**

Senate Bill 308 creates a Just Community designation for the prioritization of state funding. A "Just Community" is a geographic area that has: (1) past and current economic and housing trends that demonstrate a need for reinvestment in the area; and (2) demonstrated impact from a history of forms of legal racial segregation such as redlining, urban renewal and federal highway construction, high state imprisonment rates, or unequal exposure to environmental and health hazards. Applicants for state funding located within these areas will receive priority consideration for competitive state funding. Existing program scoring and evaluation requirements will still apply to projects located within Just Communities. The Governor designates Just Communities on the recommendation of the Secretary of DHCD, and the Governor shall identify the state programs under which a Just Community will receive priority consideration. A Just Community designation lasts for 5 years.

#### **Background and Analysis:**

For decades, federal, state and local governments have enacted racially exclusionary place-based policies. This has included redlining that limited investment in certain areas based on race, racially restrictive covenants that segregated neighborhoods, urban renewal initiatives that demolished and separated communities, high rates of incarceration (especially for low-level, nonviolent drug offenses), and the deliberate placement of environmental pollutants near BIPOC communities.

A Just Community geographic data layer and designation is intended to help reverse decades of disinvestment and exclusionary policies through a proactive approach to right the wrongs of the past. Enacting a Just Community layer is anticipated to:

1. Affirmatively advance equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity in the state of Maryland;
2. Create opportunities for the improvement of communities that have been historically underserved, with anticipated benefits for the entire state; and
3. Right the wrongs of the past, wherein the State systematically excluded certain groups from equal participation in the benefits of public resources.

#### **DHCD Position**

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 308.

**CDN SB 308 FAVORABLE.pdf**

Uploaded by: Claudia Wilson Randall

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY**  
**DHCD Just Community Designation**  
**SENATE BILL 308**  
**Education, Energy and Environment Committee**  
**February 1, 2024**  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee:

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland's community development sector and serves nearly 200 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 neighborhoods are thriving and where people of all incomes have abundant opportunities for themselves and their families.

HB 241—Designates Just Communities on the recommendation of the Secretary of DHCD after communities demonstrate past and current harms due to neglect and harms of past and current legal racial segregation, including redlining, urban renewal, high rates of incarceration, exposure to environmental and health hazards providing for the prioritization of State funding to increase racial, economic and health equity in the State.

Numerous reports have documented Maryland's history of racialized poverty and lack of human rights throughout the state. According to [Prosperity Now](#), Maryland has not seen a significant change in household net worth in the past 10 years. There is a significant disparity in net worth between White Households and Households of Color. Without intentional policies to address the harm caused by discriminatory policies of the past and present.

Despite the fact that black slave labor built nearly every institution in the state of Maryland, black Marylander have not been able to reap the benefits of their forefather's labor. No matter the measure – health, education, business ownership, home ownership, financial assets – black Marylanders by design- are behind their white counterparts. Just Communities designation begins a process to reverse the harm of this history.

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 City. These low-income renters are more likely to be people of color in historically redlined communities.

Housing has been the bedrock of racial discrimination throughout Maryland preventing black and brown people from accessing jobs, work and healthy air. According to the recent State of the Economy Report released in January 2024, housing was the top concern in every discussion across the state. Building a more equitable Maryland economy will mean building healthy places throughout the state in areas where they have not previously existed. Ensuring that all families live in affordable, stable homes will improve community health outcomes, thereby reducing health care and education costs. Housing is an urgent priority for economic growth and equitable recovery from the pandemic.

Local governments and the development community need focus on communities that have been ignored and disinvested. This bill will help the state to prioritize disinvested areas for investment. Just Communities designation will help partners to organize to build a state with opportunity at the intersection between housing and health, housing and economic development and housing and education.

This legislation is a step towards addressing the structural, political, and cultural barriers that have held back Maryland and the nation from its founding.

We respectfully request a favorable report for HB 241.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director



# **SB 308 – Housing and Community Development - Just**

Uploaded by: Crystal Hypolite

Position: FAV

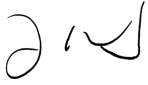
Robin Carter  
Chairperson, Board of Commissioners

Janet Abrahams  
President | Chief Executive Officer



SB 308

February 1, 2024

TO: Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee  
FROM: Janet Abrahams, Chief Executive Officer   
RE: SB 308 – Housing and Community Development - Just Community Designation  
POSITION: Support

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) supports Senate Bill 308. The Housing and Community Development - Just Community Designation bill authorizes the Governor, on the recommendation of the Secretary of Housing and Community Development, to designate certain areas as Just Communities based on specific criteria and provides for the prioritization of State funding for Just Communities to increase racial, economic, and health equity in the State.

HABC is Baltimore's largest provider of affordable housing opportunities, serving over 20,000 households (nearly 44,000 individuals) through our Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs. HABC serves low- to extremely low-income families and individuals that consist of some of the city's most vulnerable populations, including those at risk of homelessness, the elderly, persons with disabilities, veterans, and children. Historically, in Baltimore, public housing sites were built in segregated areas of the city with high concentrations of poverty. Generally, in these neighborhoods, there has been and continues to be limited access to quality schools, green space/recreation areas, grocery stores, healthcare facilities, financial institutions, transportation, etc. These areas also have high rates of unemployment and crime, high concentration of poverty and minority populations, and lower life-expectancy rates than in more affluent areas of the city.

Many of our public housing sites are in areas of the city that have suffered from decades of disinvestment, and much of our housing portfolio is aging and becoming obsolete. Therefore, HABC has undertaken several redevelopment projects including the Perkins, Somerset, Old town (PSO) Transformation Plan, Transform Poe and the revitalization of O'Donnell Heights. We are also in the process of reviewing and prioritizing redevelopment plans for our remaining public housing sites.

Annually, HABC has sought state funding from DHCD to move forward with current and future redevelopment efforts. It is our goal to replace and transform our public housing sites into mixed-income communities which includes infrastructure improvements, public safety strategies, and supports services designed to help our families increase economic self-sufficiency and improve educational outcomes. For

Housing Authority of Baltimore City | 417 East Fayette Street, Baltimore, MD 21202

 410.396.3232  www.HABC.org    @BmoreHabc 

example, within the PSO redevelopment and transformation is the construction of a new public school facility. City Springs will be rebuilt entirely with an added capacity to serve households and provide a 21st-century education in a state-of-the-art facility. The school will include a new athletic field and classroom space for early childhood through 8th-grade education. The plan also includes the creation of two new parks (North Central and South Central Parks), improvements to City Springs Park and pool, and renovation of the Chick Webb recreation center. In addition, the designs of green space in all areas of the transformation. A new grocery store will be built within the Somerset Phase, bringing a full-service grocery store to an area with none.

Prioritizing State funding in areas designated as Just Communities would provide HABC with the opportunity to revitalize our public housing stock without displacing those we serve and the possibility of bringing much needed economic development to these historically neglected neighborhoods.

HABC supports the Just Community Designation legislation to be used to prioritize state funding to increase racial, economic, and health equity in the state and particularly in Baltimore City. We respectfully request a favorable report on SB 308.

Respectfully submitted:

Janet Abrahams, HABC President & CEO

# **GHHI Written Testimony - SB308.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cynthia Herrera

Position: FAV



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January 30, 2024

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee  
2 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **FAVORABLE** – SB308 – Housing and Community Development – Just Community Designation

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI), I offer this testimony in support of SB308. GHHI is a member of the Maryland Green and Healthy Homes Task Force, Energy Efficient Maryland and has served on the New York State Climate Action Council Housing and Energy Efficiency Advisory Panel. In addition, I represent GHHI as a member of the Maryland Clean Energy Center Board of Directors, EPA Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee, CDC Lead Exposure and Prevention Advisory Committee, Maryland Public Health Association Advisory Committee and as Chair of the Maryland Lead Poisoning Prevention Commission. GHHI is dedicated to addressing the social determinants of health and advancing racial and health equity through the creation of healthy, safe and energy efficient homes. GHHI has been at the frontline of holistic healthy housing for over three decades.

Over its 30-year history, GHHI has developed the holistic energy efficiency, health and housing service delivery model that is implemented in our nationally recognized, Maryland-based direct service program. The model was adopted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and is currently being advanced in partner jurisdictions nationally. In addition, GHHI helped to elevate Maryland as a national leader in healthy housing by helping reduce childhood lead poisoning by 99% in the state and helping design over 49 pieces of healthy housing legislation that became law in the State of Maryland and local jurisdictions. By delivering a standard of excellence, GHHI aims to eradicate the negative health impacts of unhealthy housing and unjust policies to ensure better health, economic, and social outcomes for children, seniors and families with an emphasis on black and brown low-income communities. GHHI's holistic intervention approach was recently cited by EPA and HUD as a model for effective coordination of federal healthy homes and weatherization programs and resources.

Through our own research and evidence-based practice, GHHI has found that a healthy and energy efficient home yields a multitude of energy and non-energy benefits for Maryland residents, particularly low-income residents who can benefit the most from such

GHHI Written Testimony – Senate Bill 308  
January 30, 2024  
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energy efficiency improvements in terms of economic mobility, housing stability and wealth attainment over the long-term. We are deeply committed in our mission to advance racial and health equity, economic mobility and climate resiliency through healthy and energy efficient low income homes that receive electrification and decarbonization. By concentrating state resources on historically underserved and under-resourced communities, this legislation will improve outcomes for asthma, lead poisoning, household injury, and energy equity as well as other social indicators. SB308 will improve housing conditions, address legacy pollution, advance energy efficiency and reduce climate impacts on Maryland’s most vulnerable families.

#### Impact of Unhealthy Housing and Environments - Asthma

The burden of asthma greatly contributes to social inequalities in health outcomes and health disparities, which are neither inevitable nor irremediable, especially for children in Maryland. Determinants of health related to air quality and indoor environments are known to be significant contributing causes of asthma morbidity and exacerbations and disproportionately burden populations, especially children and minorities. Poor outdoor and indoor air quality and housing conditions such as mold, lack of ventilation, pests and other allergens contribute to asthma episodes for Maryland residents. Recent analysis has also shown the significant contributions of fossil-fuel burning appliances on NOx emissions, which contribute to ozone and asthma hazards at a greater level than power plants in the state. Compared to white residents, people of color are exposed to 60% more pollution from residential gas appliances in Maryland. Over 500,000 adults and children in Maryland have diagnosed asthma. Research has shown that race, ethnicity and income are common risk factors in asthma diagnoses and asthma episodes. African American asthmatics in Maryland visit the emergency room 5 times more often than White asthmatics and are hospitalized 2.7 times more often than White asthmatics. Many asthma episodes are preventable, yet high rates of asthma related emergency department visits and hospitalizations result in substantial medical costs for the state – including \$42.1 million annually for asthma related hospitalizations and \$93.3 million for asthma related ED visits.

#### Impact of Unhealthy Housing and Environments - Lead Poisoning

Lead poisoning from lead in paint, water, and contaminated soil contributes to significant learning disabilities, loss of IQ, speech development problems, attention deficit disorder, poor school performance and violent, aggressive behavior that heavily burdens low income communities. Lead poisoning directly contributes to the cycle of learning disabilities, poor school performance, steep school dropout rates and juvenile delinquency that prevent low income children in particular from being able to thrive and which burdens the State through increased special education and criminal justice costs.

#### Why Concentrate Resources on Just Communities?

As described above, minority populations in Maryland are disproportionately impacted by the unhealthy air and water and hazardous conditions that exist in their homes and communities and are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Maryland needs to advance holistic,

GHHI Written Testimony – Senate Bill 308  
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comprehensive solutions to improving air and water quality and creating healthy, energy efficient and stable housing that improves health outcomes while reducing the effects of climate change in low income communities. The state should concentrate existing and new program resources on the communities that show a need for reinvestment, negative histories of segregation, high imprisonment rates; and unequal exposure to environmental and health hazards. As Maryland works to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% from the 2006 baseline over the next eight years under Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan, this Bill ensures that historically under-resourced and overburdened communities disproportionately impacted by legacy pollution and climate change are at the forefront in receiving the maximum benefits available in this clean energy transition. By prioritizing state funding to identified Just Communities facing multiple social, economic, health and environmental vulnerabilities exacerbated by climate change, this Bill institutionalizes environmental justice--dismantling a legacy of disinvestment and racist design in Maryland.

In doing so, the state can more aggressively implement prevention policies and the enforcement of existing laws to mitigate environmental hazards and climate change. These reforms are needed to address unhealthy environments and unsafe and unstable housing that produce health and social disparities for minority children, families and older adults including: rates of lead poisoning, asthma episodes (emergency department visits and hospitalizations), household injury, household income levels, reduced life expectancy, and energy and medical cost burdens.

- Members of overburdened communities often utilize a higher percentage of their income to meet their basic health and energy needs and in maintaining a safe home. These costs represent a tremendous drain on their limited resources and create financial stressors.
- Our work providing whole-home housing interventions has shown us that there is a high housing need across the state, and that providing these services offers tremendous benefits to our most vulnerable families. The energy and non-energy benefits of investing in people's homes and addressing toxins in communities can transform lives for generations. This funding also strengthens housing stability and our neighborhoods, our green jobs workforce, and reduces strain on health and energy systems.

**Benefits of providing resources in historical underserved and overburdened communities for clean energy, energy efficiency and affordable and sustainable housing**

Maryland has a number of state weatherization programs and these energy efficiency and decarbonization interventions provide not only energy benefits related to reductions in energy usage and costs, but also produce non-energy benefits as well. Non-energy benefits are “the wider socio-economic outcomes that arise from energy efficiency improvement, aside from energy savings.” Studies have shown that energy efficiency and weatherization can improve housing conditions relating to thermal comfort, indoor air quality, pest management, and fire safety among other benefits for low income households. Furthermore, household energy

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efficiency upgrades can help mitigate climate change, spur community benefits such as economic growth, neighborhood revitalization, and resilience. These investments can also support and stimulate the local economy in overburdened communities by generating local green jobs that provide families and individuals with greater disposable income and purchasing power and help alleviate poverty (Bell 2014; IEA 2014). One study found that between 9 and 13 gross jobs are generated per every \$1 million investment in energy efficiency intervention programs.

This Bill also has tangible implications for improving racial equity. A 2020 study found that in Baltimore City, neighborhoods that were redlined as least desirable for loans today are 3.2 degrees Celsius warmer on average than neighborhoods that were identified as most desirable for loans (Hoffman, Shandas, and Pendleton 2020). In the US, Black households have the greatest likelihood of residing in older homes with compromised energy systems, aging or ineffective appliances and other assorted structural deficiencies, all of which contribute to making the home energy inefficient (Hernández, Aratani, Jiang, 2014; Hernández, Jiang, Carrión, Phillips, and Aratani, 2016). These differences highlight the legacy of environmental, energy and economic issues that burden minority neighborhoods.

Efforts to slow the pace of climate change benefit the health, safety, and economy of the entire population. However, overburdened communities are most vulnerable to the negative impacts from climate change. From our work centered on addressing social determinants of health in the home, we know that factors outside of the home will also impact health similarly. For example, numerous studies have demonstrated a link between particulate (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) levels and premature loss of life. In a major 2012 paper, researchers looked at 35 years of data collected across six US cities and found a statistically significant 14% increase in all-cause mortality for a 10-µg/m<sup>3</sup> annual increase in local PM<sub>2.5</sub> measures, confirming the findings of previous studies (Lepeule et al. 2012; Dockery et al. 1993; Laden et al. 2006). Locally, the 2016 Maryland Climate and Health Profile report found that as a result of the increase in extreme heat events in Baltimore City between 2000 and 2021, “exposures to extreme heat events during summer months increased the risk of hospitalization for heart attack by 43% among residents... This risk of hospitalization was considerably higher compared to Maryland as a whole (11%).”


Furthermore, “exposures to extreme heat events during the summer increased the risk of hospitalization for asthma by 37% in Baltimore City. Exposure to extreme precipitation events during summer months increased the risk of hospitalization for asthma in Baltimore City by 16%.” Both risks are expected to increase significantly based on climate projections for 2040. During summer months, hospitalization rates for heart attacks are projected to increase 129% from 52.8 to 121.0 per 100,000 residents if no action is taken. Hospitalizations for asthma follow a similar pattern increasing 108% from 86.8 to 180.2 per 100,000 residents. These energy and health burdens underscore the need to increase and consolidate weatherization and environmental hazard mitigation funding in underserved communities.



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SB308 represents an important commitment to prioritize resources to building a more equitable future for all of Maryland. Substantial investments in overburdened and under resourced communities are needed to address the disparities that exist. By addressing environmental risks and legacy pollution while creating healthy, affordable and sustainable housing, we can strengthen our vulnerable communities for the benefit of all residents. SB308 will build resilience and advance racial, health and energy equity by better meeting the critical needs of Maryland's vulnerable children, families and seniors. We ask for a Favorable Report on SB308.

Respectfully Submitted,

DocuSigned by:  
  
1A42B3060D6A435...  
Ruth Ann Norton  
President and CEO

# **Testimony\_SB 308\_Maryland Philanthropy Network.pdf**

Uploaded by: Danista Hunte

Position: FAV



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

From: Danista Hunte, President and CEO ([dhunte@marylandphilanthropy.org](mailto:dhunte@marylandphilanthropy.org))

Shanetta Martin, Director of Public Policy, Education, and Special Projects

Re: HB241/SB308: Housing and Community Development – Just Communities Designation

Date: January 26, 2024

Position: Favorable Support

Maryland Philanthropy Network (MPN) is a statewide organization representing over 110 private, family, corporate, and community foundations. Together our members steward over \$9 Billion in charitable assets with approximately \$1.1 Billion distributed annually to public charities, much of it benefiting Maryland residents. MPN is committed to transformative and innovative work that results in an equitable and just Maryland. We are encouraged by the Department of Housing and Community Development’s action with this bill to right historical wrongs of the past due to decades of disinvestment and exclusionary policies by taking a proactive approach to target state investments to jurisdictions across our state that will have a Just Communities Designation.

To ground this issue, MPN has a significant number of members who care about and fund the Baltimore community, which would likely receive a Just Communities Designation. What we know is there has been a history of redlining, which started in Baltimore. The socio-economic landscape of Baltimore reveals what some call the “White L” and “Black Butterfly” where disinvestment, policies, and practices have led to communities that have not received resources and services ranging from a lack of adequate housing, public schools that are underfunded, neighborhoods that lack amenities, and to other poor social determinants of health. These negative indicators and disparities show up specifically in the Black Butterfly zone as compared to the White L.

In the community development arena, MPN members partnered with the Healthy Neighbors Initiative, a model public/private partnership, whose mission is to help strong but undervalued neighborhoods increase home values, market their communities, create high standards for property improvement and forge strong connections among neighbors. Healthy Neighbors has pooled the resources of city funds, corporate support, and private philanthropy to stem growth in mixed-income neighborhoods. Statewide efforts include Endow Maryland where state tax credits are distributed across the network of community foundations leading to nonprofit organizations being able to address economic development issues in their communities.

Philanthropy can be a great partner to the state as grantmakers are connected to nonprofits and small community-based organizations that have the expertise and lived experiences to drive the solutions to address the challenges and needs of those communities. However, philanthropic dollars cannot fill the gap alone. Public dollars are needed to right the wrongs of long-term disinvestment and to institutionalize long-term reinvestment. We applaud the Moore-Miller Administration in their



demonstrated commitment to operationalize and actualize an increase in public/private partnerships. Maryland Philanthropy Network is a full partner in that process. Philanthropy has always been willing and able to partner with government at all levels. We look forward to being a resource to assist with aligning state investments with private local dollars in equitable ways to support Just Communities across our state.

We urge favorable support with amendments for HB241. It is the just thing to do. This is the time to do it.

Thank you.

**Written Testimony - SB0308 - 1-31-24.pdf**

Uploaded by: Franklyn Baker

Position: FAV

**Written Testimony: SB0308 – Housing and Community Development –  
Just Community Designation**

Author: Franklyn Baker  
President and CEO  
United Way of Central Maryland

Testimony Submission Date: January 31, 2024

On behalf of the United Way of Central Maryland, Inc. (UWCM), I am 100% in favor of this piece of legislation. In summary it notes - *To Authorizing the Governor, on the recommendation of the Secretary of Housing and Community Development, to designate certain areas as Just Communities based on certain criteria; and providing for the prioritization of State funding for Just Communities to increase racial, economic, and health equity in the State.*

The work of UWCM and many of its partner organizations in Greater Baltimore and across the state have a mission, vision and set of core values that completely agree with the summarized version of Senate Bill 0308. UWCM promotes equity, access and opportunity so that no one is left behind. The mission of UWCM is improving lives by building leaders (from the boardroom to the block) and mobilizing the caring power of communities. The aspirational vision is happy, thriving communities where all people live their best lives – on their own terms. Our organization continues to scale its impact in partnership with other nonprofits, companies, educational institutions, government agencies and myriad stakeholders via implementing sustainable solutions in health, housing, economic advancement and education. The method of optimizing community advancement and empowerment is accomplished by deep listening and co-creating viable solutions with residents.

**Just Communities** can only materialize when select neighborhoods and their residents are placed front and center. Residents must be a core component of the desired and achieved results. UWCM anticipates doing all we can with the Governor's Office, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development and others to fulfill this encouraging goal of designating such communities throughout our state.

**SB308\_DHCD\_SUPPORT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jacob Day

Position: FAV



**DATE:** February 1, 2024

**BILL NO.:** Senate Bill 308

**TITLE:** Housing and Community Development - Just Community Designation

**COMMITTEE:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

### Letter of Support

#### **Description of Bill:**

Senate Bill 308 creates a Just Community designation for the prioritization of state funding. A “Just Community” is a geographic area that has: (1) past and current economic and housing trends that demonstrate a need for reinvestment in the area; and (2) demonstrated impact from a history of forms of legal racial segregation such as redlining, urban renewal and federal highway construction, high state imprisonment rates, or unequal exposure to environmental and health hazards. Applicants for state funding located within these areas will receive priority consideration for competitive state funding. Existing program scoring and evaluation requirements will still apply to projects located within Just Communities. The Governor designates Just Communities on the recommendation of the Secretary of DHCD, and the Governor shall identify the state programs under which a Just Community will receive priority consideration. A Just Community designation lasts for 5 years.

#### **Background and Analysis:**

For decades, federal, state and local governments have enacted racially exclusionary place-based policies. This has included redlining that limited investment in certain areas based on race, racially restrictive covenants that segregated neighborhoods, urban renewal initiatives that demolished and separated communities, high rates of incarceration (especially for low-level, nonviolent drug offenses), and the deliberate placement of environmental pollutants near BIPOC communities.

A Just Community geographic data layer and designation is intended to help reverse decades of disinvestment and exclusionary policies through a proactive approach to right the wrongs of the past. Enacting a Just Community layer is anticipated to:

1. Affirmatively advance equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity in the state of Maryland;
2. Create opportunities for the improvement of communities that have been historically underserved, with anticipated benefits for the entire state; and
3. Right the wrongs of the past, wherein the State systematically excluded certain groups from equal participation in the benefits of public resources.

#### **DHCD Position**

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 308.

# **SB 308 - Maryland Legal Aid - FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Somil Trivedi

Position: FAV



**MARYLAND  
LEGAL AID**

*Advancing*  
**Human Rights and  
Justice for All**

**Senate Bill 308**

**Housing and Community Development – Just Community Designation**

In the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Hearing on February 1, 2024

**Position: FAVORABLE**

*Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits its written and oral testimony on SB 308 in response to a request from the Department of Housing and Community Development*

MLA, the state’s largest provider of free civil legal services, is proud to testify in favor of SB 308, because our clients come from precisely the communities the bill describes. Our clients *are* those communities. However, as the text recognizes, those communities have been anything but just.

Our clients suffer from virtually all the issues identified in the proposed selection criteria. Ours are the families who cannot afford a home, and therefore cannot build intergenerational wealth, because of “past and current trends in homeownership”—namely, home prices that have skyrocketed due to underproduction. They are the Black and Brown people who have been summarily excluded from the best and safest neighborhoods and schools because of “redlining, exclusionary zoning, or racially restrictive covenants.” They are the elderly and disabled Marylanders in nursing homes and assisted living, struggling from “unequal exposure to environmental and health hazards,” fighting for the care and benefits they deserve. They are the victims of our failed, racist experiment in mass incarceration, living in areas with high “imprisonment rate[s],” seeking criminal record expungements so they can work and contribute.

These are neighborhoods like Cherry Hill, Curtis Bay, and Historic Sharp Leadenhall in Baltimore, which were redlined to the hilt and bear the brunt of environmental injustice near the water. Like Cottage City and Seat Pleasant in Prince George’s, where District-adjacent housing prices are ever increasing, yet the poverty rate in those areas far outstrips the rest of the county. Like South Cumberland in Allegany County, where racial segregation in housing opportunity doubled from 2010 to 2017. Like Aberdeen and Edgewood in Harford County, where rental properties are poisoned by lead paint and mold, leading to persistent health complications, particularly in our elders living with disabilities.

We commend the Administration and the General Assembly for identifying these factors as the sources of income inequality and underinvestment in our state. The bill sends a powerful message about our values. They are MLA’s values as well. Moreover, the bill is a substantive first step to ensure that fiscal investment is directed to the neediest communities—those who have been ignored for too long. Of course, it is only a first step. MLA looks forward to working with public and private actors alike to take the concrete follow-on measures of securing sufficient funding, identifying the most meaningful projects, and ensuring the returns of those projects go to the people who deserve it most.

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Because SB 308 makes an important first stride toward remedying past and present discrimination and underinvestment, MLA urges its passage and looks forward to next steps. If you would like additional information on this bill or the underlying issues it addresses, please contact Somil Trivedi, MLA's Chief Legal & Advocacy Director, at [strivedi@mdlaboratory.org](mailto:strivedi@mdlaboratory.org).

**SB0308-EEE\_MACo\_LOI.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko

Position: INFO



## **Senate Bill 308**

### *Housing and Community Development - Just Community Designation*

MACo Position:

**LETTER OF INFORMATION**

Date: February 1, 2024

To: Energy, Education, and the Environment  
Committee

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) offers the following **Letter of Information** regarding SB 308. This bill establishes a “Just Community Designation” and grants the Governor discretion to “identify state programs under which a Just Community shall receive priority for State funding.”

Counties recognize the concept of prioritizing funding for certain communities based on historical, environmental, or other factors. The State has successfully developed a number of tools and requirements around environmental justice, which counties (and others) currently use. The scope of SB 308, though, seems unusually broad and may trigger unintended consequences, with effects on current programs that have a deeply conceived distribution through statutory formulas or otherwise. Specifically, page 3, lines 14-16, say:

**“(C) AT THE TIME JUST COMMUNITIES ARE DESIGNATED OR RENEWED, THE GOVERNOR SHALL IDENTIFY STATE PROGRAMS UNDER WHICH A JUST COMMUNITY SHALL RECEIVE PRIORITY FOR STATE FUNDING.”**

This language, without additional context or guardrails, may be unintentionally used to inequitably redirect significant amounts of state investment, effectively choosing winners and losers. While it is recognized that certain communities may need more investment, that need must be examined in a broader and more wholistic context. Even though most programs are already crafted to ensure resources are delivered in a targeted way, the State may benefit from additional tweaks around the edges to produce more desired outcomes. If the intent of SB 308 is to do just that, counties suggest clarifying language be added to more accurately detail which programs the Governor will have authority to refine, and which should require action of the General Assembly to alter formulas and other distribution mechanisms.

Counties stand ready to contribute to discussions to refine and improve SB 308, if the Committee seeks to advance this potentially broad legislation.