



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(301) 952-3700 County Council

LETTER OF INFORMATION

SB 484/HB 538: Land Use - Affordable Housing - Zoning Density and Permitting (Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024)

Prince George's County Council welcomes Governor Moore's bold legislative proposal that attempts to address Maryland's housing supply shortage. While Prince George's County Council supports the core tenants of SB484/HB538 Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024, this letter highlights some of the unintended consequences that will profoundly impact Prince George's County residents. The Council supports affordable housing but mandating more affordable housing in a jurisdiction that is one of the state's largest providers of affordable housing places an undue burden on the county's economic development goals. Prince George's County provides more affordable housing than any other Metropolitan D.C. suburb. To attract large and small businesses, we must balance our housing stock with the need to have a more balanced tax base.

The Administration's proposal to allow manufactured (or even modular) homes placed in any single-family home zone is well-intentioned but too broad because it would disrupt the local character of neighborhoods and potentially the economic stability of those impacted neighborhoods. Prince George's County residents continue to face low appraisal valuations compared to our neighboring counties. Legislation that encourages developers to build factory-designed homes will only lead to lower property values for surrounding Prince George's County communities.

Clarifying language is needed to limit what nonprofits are eligible for density bonuses. The Council has expressed concern over for-profit developers creating nonprofit arms to exploit favorable development laws, specifically to the 30% density bonus allowed for nonprofits. Limiting eligible nonprofits to those whose sole mission is to provide affordable housing will lead to more equitable outcomes. Additionally, the Administration should consider adding geographical limitations for nonprofit developers by including incentives for nonprofits to develop in Maryland Enterprise Zones, which will catalyze equity and inclusion. Without providing some geographic limitation on nonprofit density bonus, the county could see increased sprawl. Focusing and locating affordable housing near available resources and transportation infrastructure would be more appropriate and viable for the goals the legislation is seeking to address. Therefore, we recommend that Maryland Enterprise Zones or other otherwise similarly designated areas be considered for affordable housing development to avoid sprawl.

SB 484/HB538 uses language that doesn't fit our modern zoning categories. Recently, Prince George's County updated its zoning ordinances, and as a result, very few ordinances are exclusively residential or exclusively nonresidential. For example, even primarily residential zones allow for some commercial uses. Also, we request this Administration consider exempting local and national historical districts to preserve our historic communities. California has followed this example and this legislation is modeled after that state.

Providing the necessary infrastructure improvements in these communities is a prerequisite to increasing the housing supply. Areas along WMATA's Blue Line corridor, where this legislation attempts to increase density, are prone to flooding. This bill must include infrastructure funding for stormwater management systems to prevent future flooding that will only be heightened with increased density.

This proposed legislation, although laudable, has significant unintended and collateral consequences. Nonetheless, the Prince George's County Council appreciates the opportunity to work with the Moore Administration to address affordable housing, which is important to us and to Prince George's County residents. The County Council respectfully asks that you consider these recommendations.