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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

February 28, 2024

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Education, Energy and the Environment, Chair
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Senate Bill 484: Land Use – Affordable Housing – Zoning Density and Permitting (Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024)

Position: Favorable

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

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony today. I am writing to you on behalf of The City of Frederick in SUPPORT of SB484: The Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024.

It is common knowledge that Maryland is experiencing an affordable housing crisis. For several years, cities and towns across our state have worked hard to address this crisis across the many forms it takes:

- General Affordability
- Lack of housing stock
- Connectivity to infrastructure and areas of opportunity
- Building electrification and the transition to cleaner energies

The areas above form the core of our housing concerns, but they are by no means exhaustive, and represent broad strokes that contain tremendous nuance across our communities.

In the City of Frederick, we have made strides in addressing the crisis by establishing a Department of Housing and Human Services, in 2020. We have implemented a Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit ordinance. Most recently, we released an \$8.2 million plan for affordable housing projects, which will support over 870 families and promote inclusive community growth. This multifaceted approach reflects a deep commitment to enhancing living conditions and ensuring equitable access to housing across the housing continuum for all residents.



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Of course, any increase in affordable housing when balancing the economic realities today requires the investment into infrastructure to build and sustain healthy communities. This includes investment in transportation, health care, childcare, energy, public safety, and education.

This multifaceted affordable housing crisis that exists across a diverse set of communities requires an extensive, well-resourced toolkit, as well as thoughtful leadership that brings stakeholders together to solve our collective challenges. Senate Bill 484 represents an opportunity for true partnership with the State of Maryland in bringing these tools to bear at a municipal level. I am grateful to the Governor and his team for their enthusiasm, collaboration, and thoughtfulness in addressing the affordable housing crisis in our state.

As the fastest growing jurisdiction in Maryland, and the second fastest growing jurisdiction in the DMV, Frederick is an epicenter of our region-wide housing dynamics. Our goal is to create a true range of housing options that spans the full spectrum of renters and buyers within our community. In doing so, we are constantly reminded of how intersectional this issue is. Affordable housing, for instance, impacts young renters and first-time homebuyers who may carry significant debt from student loans, older residents living on fixed incomes with growing medical expenses, and lower and middle-income wage earners with children in their households.

Understanding the diversity of the housing crisis is essential for de-stigmatizing conversations around affordability, as well as acknowledging the broad coalition of Marylanders who are dependent on the tools provided by legislation like Senate Bill 484. This legislation is broad in its impact because the crisis it is designed to address touches Marylanders from every walk of life.

For these reasons, The City of Frederick supports Governor Moore's Housing Agenda, including Senate Bill 484, and urge the Committee for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Michael O'Connor,
Mayor