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**February 20, 2024**

**Testimony on House Bill 538**  
**Land Use – Affordable Housing – Zoning Density and Permitting**  
**(Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024)**  
**House Environment and Transportation Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of more than 1800 nonprofit organizations and institutions. We urge you to support House Bill 538 and approve Governor Moore’s proposal to expand opportunities for new housing development as part of the strategy to address the critical shortage of affordable housing in our state.

House Bill 538 would directly address Maryland’s housing supply and affordability crisis to lower costs and expand economic opportunity for Marylanders across the state. The bill incentivizes construction of highly targeted new housing by removing barriers to development that have contributed to the current supply shortage. The legislation also has provisions to modernize land use law and expedite and simplify approval for transit-oriented development, development on former state-owned complexes, and housing development by 501(c)(3) organizations if certain affordability requirements are met, in addition to incentivizing development projects by allowing for greater density when certain conditions are met.

Limitations on development such as density or other planning and zoning restrictions, unnecessarily limit development opportunities and increase costs of land, and the cost of housing purchase or rental. Maryland is estimated to have a housing shortage today of over 100,000 units, and the majority of those are needed for low-income families.

Maryland Nonprofits’ broad membership includes organizations serving the entire spectrum of individual, family and community needs across our state. This perspective allows us to see better than most that resolving poverty and the social and economic inequities that burden the lives of too many Marylanders, particularly families and communities of color, requires addressing the multiple interconnected challenges that they face every day. Factors such as lack of available transportation, food insecurity, unaffordable childcare, and access to adequate health care and services, all impact the health and education of children, the opportunity to access to jobs and stable employment, the ability to build a sustaining level of wealth, and more. Access to safe, stable, and affordable housing is essential to meeting most if not all of these needs.



Excessive housing costs among renters, but also for many low-and moderate-income homeowners, impacts their families' nutrition, decisions to when to seek health care, ability to own a car, pay college debt or save for their own children's education, and to live within accessible reach of employment, educational opportunities, or shopping for basic needs. The education of children who are forced to attend two or more different schools a year because of housing instability will suffer regardless of our investments in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Housing affordability, or its 'unaffordability', has become a serious crisis in our state. 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 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 almost 100,000 low-income households by 2030, the shortage will worsen unless the state creates and preserves many more affordable homes.

The "Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024" is a necessary and integral part of Governor Moore's plan to end poverty and make Maryland more affordable for all.

We urge you to give House Bill 538 a **favorable report**.