



House Bill 7

Housing Innovation Pilot Program and Housing Innovation Fund - Establishment (Housing Innovation Pilot Program Act of 2024)

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Environment and Transportation
Committee

Date: January 30, 2024

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 7. This bill would provide counties with additional resources through the Housing Innovation Pilot Program, incentivizing the development of county-owned affordable housing projects.

For the 2024 Maryland General Assembly Session, MACo has made it a priority – one of the Association’s four legislative initiatives – to *Advance Comprehensive Housing Solutions*. Much like climate change and sea level rise, the challenges surrounding affordable housing are vast and call for a large, multipronged effort. While in other policy areas, it may be easy to deduce a simple cause-and-effect relationship, housing is a complex web of multifaceted factors. Addressing challenges like workforce, financing, interest rates, broad economic trends, supply chain, and large out-of-state corporate interests – among many other obstacles – requires an all-hands-on-deck effort from policy makers at all levels.

MACo is working with sponsors to cross-file legislation to target several components of this crisis: abandonment/blight disincentives, corporate owner transparency, and short-term rental oversight. Additionally, under this initiative, counties will be supporting other pro-housing legislation which helps to advance the conversation, balances local flexibility, and ensures more Marylanders can afford a place to call home.

In that vein, HB 7 would provide a significant tool for jurisdictions seeking to take direct action in their local housing markets. The program would provide dollar-for-dollar matching funds for county housing projects meeting certain state criteria. These matching funds would take the form of either low- or no-interest loans, giving the State a renewable programmatic funding source and giving counties access to low-cost capital.

HB 7 creates a program that is renewable and empowers local governments to do more in ensuring access to affordable housing. For this reason, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 7 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.