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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB 3
Land Use - Expedited Development Review Processes for Affordable Housing -
Requirements**

Testimony by Delegate Vaughn Stewart

January 30th, 2024 | Environment & Transportation Committee

What the Bill Does

HB 3 requires counties and municipalities to expedite the review process for charitable organizations and public housing authorities that build affordable housing. These applications are still subject to the same standards of review and approval as all other projects in the review process.

Currently, nine of our 23 counties have some form of expedited development review. Because the details of the process vary by jurisdiction, the bill includes a non-exhaustive list of possible ways locals could speed up the development process.

We understand that some local jurisdictions may not be able to logistically create an expedited process for certain types of projects. The bill creates a waiver process whereby local jurisdictions could request an exemption from the Department of Housing and Community Development (“DHCD”) if they are unable to comply.

Why the Bill is Important

Maryland is facing an affordable housing crisis. According to DHCD, Maryland is [85,000](#) units short of what is needed for low-income renters, and this number is only increasing. Meanwhile, [housing production](#) has slowed across the state. In 2005, the state saw more than 3,000 units permitted per month. In 2023, that number dropped to less than 900 units per month. As more Marylanders struggle to afford a roof over their heads, we need state and local governments to work together to find bold solutions to build more supply.

In the past several years, many nonprofits have signaled a desire to convert their excess space into new housing. For example, houses of worship can be ideal locations for affordable housing. Their buildings are often located near jobs, transit, and other amenities, and declines in religious attendance have meant that many houses of worship have unused space and parking lots that could be used to build affordable housing.

The bill aims to remove barriers to affordable housing projects for charitable organizations and public housing authorities. Many charitable organizations across the state have already partnered with developers to build affordable housing units on their land. However, many more have decided not to pursue this option because of the costs associated with the lengthy zoning process. Similarly, projects spearheaded by public housing authorities often fail to pencil out because of the costs associated with the development timeline. This bill lessens the barrier to entry for both public and nonprofit entities seeking to build affordable housing.

Why the Committee Should Vote Favorably

Zoning changes, development proposals, and project approvals can take years to complete. With the pressing need for affordable housing in the state, this bill helps nonprofits and public housing authorities navigate an arduous process with a bit more ease. This bill represents one small step toward solving our state's housing shortage. **I urge a favorable report.**