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Secretary
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DATE: February 6, 2024
BILL NO.: House Bill 17
TITLE: Charter Counties – Comprehensive Plans – Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing
COMMITTEE: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Letter of Support

Description of Bill:

This legislation would expand HB90’s requirements to affirmatively further fair housing to Maryland’s 11 charter counties: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Cecil, Dorchester, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George’s, Talbot and Wicomico. It requires these counties to include in their comprehensive plans, beginning in 2025, a fair housing assessment to ensure that the county is affirmatively furthering fair housing.

Background and Analysis:

HB90, enacted in 2021, requires the housing elements of municipalities and non-charter counties in Maryland to affirmatively further fair housing, and requires DHCD to consult and work with local jurisdictions to gather data and submit a report on fair housing to the Governor and General Assembly every five years.

“Affirmatively furthering fair housing,” as defined in HB90, includes taking meaningful actions to:

- Overcome patterns of segregation;
- Foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to housing and opportunity based on protected characteristics;
- Address significant disparities in housing needs and access to opportunity;
- Replace segregated living patterns with truly integrated and balanced living patterns; and
- Foster and maintain compliance with civil rights and fair housing laws.

Aside from the requirement to include a fair housing assessment in the comprehensive plan, HB90 does not require jurisdictions to take specific actions to affirmatively further fair housing, allowing them to develop their own tailored approaches that fit the needs of the local community.

Expanding these requirements to charter counties – which include over half of Maryland’s population – ensures all Marylanders will benefit from HB90’s focus on resolving inequities in housing and applies existing state law equitably across local governments.

DHCD Position:

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on House Bill 17.