



Environment and Transportation Committee

House Bill 534

Community Development Administration - Live Near Your School Program - Funding and Extension

February 16, 2024

Favorable

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts regarding House Bill 534. The bill extends the sunset provision for fiscal years 2026 through 2030. Since 2021, the Community Development Administration in the Department of Housing and Community Development has administered this impactful home buyer assistance program.

The USM is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional higher education centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. Each of USM's 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

The "heart" of the Live Near Your School Program in House Bill 534 is that it provides a homebuying financial incentive that can be used toward a downpayment or closing costs associated with the purchase of a home. House Bill 534 not only supports current students and recent graduates in buying a home, but also encourages them to live closer to the public institution that plays a key role in their lives.

The ability to live within walking and/or transit distance to one's place of employment or educational study reduces not only travel and energy costs, but also the physical and mental impacts of long commutes, traffic congestion, and poor air quality. The cities and counties that are home to University System of Maryland (USM) institutions continue to evolve and welcome new residents. The 12 institutions and 3 regional centers that call the USM "home" all boast an unrivaled sense of community and intimacy without sacrificing diversity or dynamism.

A home, sold to a qualified applicant under fair lending terms, is one of the best investments anyone can make and a way to establish a financial foundation for future generations. The bill extends this critical investment. The continued support allows students and recent graduates to:

- Become involved, active, and civically engaged in ever-growing communities.
- Shorten lengthy commutes to work or class.

- Live within walking distance of restaurants, stores, stadiums, and cultural centers.
- Choose from a variety of housing types, ranging from historic single-family homes, to rowhouses to newly constructed condominiums.

The USM urges a favorable report on House Bill 534.



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