



# FREDERICK

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

---

February 20, 2024

House Environment and Transportation Committee  
The Honorable Chair Marc Korman  
Room 251  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: House Bill 538: Land Use – Affordable Housing – Zoning Density and Permitting (Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024)

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony today. I am writing to you in SUPPORT of HB 538: The Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024.

It is common knowledge that Maryland is experiencing an affordable housing crisis. For several years, cities and towns across our state have worked hard to address this crisis across the many forms it takes:

- General affordability
- Lack of housing stock
- Connectivity to infrastructure and areas of opportunity
- Building electrification and the transition to cleaner energies

The areas above form the core of our housing concerns, but they are by no means exhaustive, and represent broad strokes that contain tremendous nuance across our communities.

In the City of Frederick, we have made strides in addressing the crisis by establishing a Department of Housing and Human Services, in 2020. We have a Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) ordinance, and recently the released an \$8.2 million plan for affordable housing projects supported through this MPDU program. We project it will support over 870 families and promote inclusive community growth. A multifaceted approach reflects our deep commitment to enhance living conditions and ensuring equitable access across the housing continuum for all residents.

Of course, increasing affordable housing cannot occur in a vacuum. Balancing the many economic realities households face require the investment in infrastructure to build and sustain



# FREDERICK

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

---

healthy and safe communities. These include the realities of access to transportation, health care, energy, childcare, and education to name a few.

The affordable housing crisis that exists across a diverse set of communities requires an extensive, well-resourced toolkit, as well as thoughtful leadership that brings stakeholders together to solve our collective challenges. House Bill 538 adds much needed tools for cities to use in addressing the affordable housing crisis, from addressing density to streamlining permitting as tools to support new development. As importantly, the legislation represents an opportunity for true partnership between the State of Maryland and municipal government. I am grateful to the Governor and his team for their enthusiasm, collaboration, and thoughtfulness in igniting discussion about the solutions to address the need for affordable housing in our state.

As the fastest growing jurisdiction in Maryland, and the second fastest growing jurisdiction in the DMV, Frederick is an epicenter of our region-wide housing dynamics. Our goal is to create a true range of housing options that spans the full spectrum of renters and buyers within our community. In doing so, we are constantly reminded of how intersectional this issue is. Affordable housing, for instance, impacts young renters and first-time homebuyers who may carry significant debt from student loans, older residents living on fixed incomes with growing medical expenses, as well as lower and middle-income wage earners with children in their households.

Understanding the diversity of the housing crisis is essential for meaningful conversations around addressing affordability and acknowledging the broad coalition of Marylanders who are dependent on the tools provided by legislation like House Bill 538. This legislation is broad in its impact because the crisis it is designed to address touches Marylanders from every walk of life.

For these reasons, I support Governor Moore's Housing Agenda, including House Bill 538, and urge the Committee for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Michael O'Connor,

Mayor