

February 20, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates

Re: Support for House Bill 538 (Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024)

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Greater Washington Partnership (the Partnership), I am writing to express our support for the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024 (HB 538). This bill will help address the state's housing shortage by incentivizing construction of market rate and affordable housing units near transit stations. We applaud the Moore Administration for introducing this measure and confronting housing challenges on behalf of Maryland's workforce.

The Partnership is a nonprofit alliance of nearly 50 leading corporate, university and nonprofit employers in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia committed to championing the region's growth and vitality. Recognizing the importance of mobility and inclusive growth to our economic competitiveness, the Partnership developed the [Blueprint for Regional Mobility](#) and the [Regional Blueprint for Inclusive Growth](#), employer-informed strategies to enhance the transportation system from Baltimore to Richmond and address the region's pervasive racial wealth gap. Through these Blueprints, our employer community has called for increased housing availability in rapid transit corridors as a cost-effective strategy to expand access to opportunity in the region.

Cost of living – and specifically the cost of housing – features prominently in domestic migration patterns and appears to be contributing to Maryland's relatively slow population growth since at least 2019.¹ Housing demand has outpaced supply and cost increases have outpaced wage growth, exacerbating an affordability crisis. Maryland's housing shortage is estimated to be at least 96,000 units, a figure likely to grow absent major changes in the market.² The lack of affordable and attainable housing threatens the state's economic competitiveness and vitality. As housing becomes increasingly unattainable, businesses face difficulty attracting and retaining talent, which has serious implications for community investment and economic growth.

Promoting transit-oriented housing development is a particularly impactful and equitable solution to this challenge. The average resident in the Washington, DC metro area can access more than 1.7 million jobs within 45 minutes by vehicle – assuming she has access to a personal vehicle – yet just 160,000 jobs (9%) can be accessed in the same amount of time via transit.³ In the Baltimore region, this figure stands at 6% of jobs. Co-locating both market-rate and affordable housing with regional transit stations can greatly improve job accessibility, and by extension upward economic mobility for Marylanders.

¹ See [State of the Economy](#), Office of the Comptroller (January 2024).

² See [December Briefing](#), House Environment and Transportation Committee (December 2023); see also [There's a housing crisis in Maryland. Here's how lawmakers might fix it](#), The Herald-Mail (Feb. 13, 2023) (120,000 units).

³ See [Blueprint for Regional Mobility](#), Greater Washington Partnership.



By facilitating increased density in transit corridors, HB 538 has the potential to accelerate housing production while channeling density in a manner that ensures Marylanders of all incomes are able to access opportunities across the region.

For these reasons, we urge a **favorable** report on HB 538. Thank you for your consideration and shared commitment to reducing barriers to mobility and opportunity, as well as making this region the best place to live, work, and build a business.

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