



Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
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The Honorable Marc Korman, Chairman
and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Annapolis, Maryland

Re: **HB 0538** – Land Use – Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024 – **UNFAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Korman and Members,

Under HB 0538, the State Department of Planning will control decisions on “affordable housing qualified projects”, even when a project does not comply with a jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan and local planning and zoning laws. This can include height, setback, parking, and other requirements. A single-family zone could include newly-defined “middle housing” – duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, cottage clusters, townhomes.

The Maryland Federation of Republican Women believes that local governments are closest to the people, and have a greater understanding of the desires of their citizens and the carrying capacity of their region. Local governments will be forced to ignore limitations on density and housing types in communities where the comprehensive plan and zoning laws were implemented only after substantial citizen input and acceptance.

The purchase decision of a home buyer includes many factors (price, taxes, schools, traffic, amenities, location, etc.). Any attempt to legislate a perfect Maryland community will fail because we are a diverse state in population and geography. There is no “one size fits all”.

Removing local authority to limit the height, setback, and bulk of a “qualified” project can change the character and design of the neighborhood where it is located. In zoning parlance, you will create a “change in the neighborhood” that will justify allowing nearby property owners to seek zoning changes based on these new parameters because the “qualified” project has nullified the restrictions that existed before.

Requiring that 30% to 40% of units be “affordable” within 40 years, keeping rent at 30% of the household’s income, and using 60% of the area’s median income as the qualifying income will most assuredly result in a large disparity between rent revenue and cost of upkeep. Who will be providing the additional funds needed to ensure those properties are well maintained and secure?

Local governments are best qualified to make decisions on design, density, and housing composition.

Please give **HB 0538** an **UNFAVORABLE** Report.

Sincerely,
Ella Ennis
Legislative Chairman