



**BRANDON M. SCOTT**  
MAYOR

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**HB 1524**

March 19, 2024

**TO:** Members of the House Ways & Means Committee

**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations

**RE:** HB 1524 – Horse Racing – Racing Facility Ownership and Construction – Racing Operations

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Atterbearry, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 1524.

HB 1524 would codify the transfer of ownership of the Pimlico Racing Facility from private ownership to the State of Maryland. In doing so, the bill will alter the location, type, and ownership of horse racing facilities that the Maryland Stadium Authority is authorized to finance; authorize the State Racing Commission to issue a license to hold a race meeting and award racing days to a certain nonprofit organization that leases a racing facility owned by the Maryland Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority; and make several other changes to align the law with the provisions of the transfer of ownership.

The Baltimore City Administration has significant interest in the furtherance of development activity at the Pimlico Racing Facility and has made significant investments in the surrounding Park Heights community. Park Heights is one of the City's seven Impact Investment Areas (IIAs). The IIAs are neighborhoods that consist of significant clusters of vacants, are adjacent to anchor institutions, have strong community engagement and an existing network of community assets. The City will be prioritizing the IIAs for vacants reductions as part of the Administration's comprehensive vacant housing reduction strategy. As an IIA, City agencies, such as the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Department of Planning, Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, the Department of Transportation meet with Park Heights' community partners in bi-monthly working groups to implement comprehensive block level planning.

In addition, Park Heights is part of Mayor Brandon M. Scott's Neighborhood Subcabinet, which brings together City agency leadership to focus on challenges in the ongoing revitalization of Park Heights. This work is carried out in close partnership with community organizations such as Park Heights Renaissance, Pimlico Merchants Association, the Parklane Community Association, the Cylburn Community Association, and many others.

DHCD will be investing significant resources into the renovation and demolition of vacants in Park Heights. Key to the redevelopment success of the Park Heights' IIA is the continued strength and vitality of local anchor institutions, such as the Pimlico Racing Facility.

The Administration has invested in several residential projects which have produced 159 affordable units, including 75 affordable senior units, to date. Another 506 affordable units are underway including the first brand-new single-family homes constructed in Park Heights in 20 years by the NHP Foundation. Phase I of this project broke ground in December 2023 which includes the Senior Building portion of the overall project. This phase alone totals \$52M in investment with \$13.3M of direct investment from the City. Additional residential investment includes home repair grants for legacy homeowners, currently totaling nearly \$2M, to ensure that the neighborhood's renaissance benefits those who have called Park Heights home for generations.

In addition to the above residential investments, the BCA has been prioritizing community and youth facilities in the area. These projects include completed renovations at the Towanda Grantley Recreation Center, with forthcoming renovations to the park and playground; design of the new Park Heights Library, which is nearing 60%; design of the CC Jackson Park expansion project, which is nearing design completion; upcoming renovations to Cottage Avenue and Queensbury playgrounds; and renovations at both JD Gross Recreation Center and Langston Hughes Community Center which are currently underway. The new Park Heights Library will be the first new Enoch Pratt library constructed in 20 years. The Administration also has begun the process to officially designate Park Heights as a Main Street which will help to further the revitalization efforts underway.

A key component of the success of the Park Heights community is the strength of its local anchor institutions including the Pimlico Racing Facility. The BCA believes that HB 1524 will not only keep the Preakness Stakes in Baltimore City for years to come but will further bolster the development and renaissance underway within the surrounding community. For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 1524.