

Written Testimony for the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair
Senator Jim Rosapepe, Vice Chair

RE: In Support of SB0409

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee. My written testimony reflects 30 years of planning experience in three Maryland jurisdictions. I currently serve as the Director of Planning & Permitting in Frederick County. During my career I was also privileged to serve on the Sustainable Growth Commission under both the O'Malley and Hogan administrations. In 2014, Governor O'Malley asked the Commission to make recommendations to accelerate the state's infill, redevelopment and revitalization efforts. One recommendation from the 2014 Reinvest Maryland report stated: "The state and local governments must use existing resources more efficiently and develop or enable creative and effective financial tools to support targeted reinvestment priorities." It goes on to state that "To accelerate reinvestment, the Governor and General Assembly must develop or enable new sources of funding, or better direct existing funding to support infill, redevelopment and revitalization...". While some legislation to promote reinvestment has been passed, such as the 2013 Sustainable Communities – Designation and Financing Law (HB613), none of these attempts have provided communities with the ability to target its own redevelopment investment strategy.

While there has been widespread agreement on the value of investment in redevelopment and discouragement of greenfield development and sprawl, time and time again the best plans of jurisdictions across the state have faced difficulty bringing those plans to fruition. Our communities have a vision of walkable, vibrant, revitalized places. They have invested in their visions, altered regulations and plans to accommodate those visions, and leaned heavily on their economic development teams to bring those visions to life through private investment. However, in spite of their best efforts, there is no overcoming the fact that it is still cheaper and therefore more desirable to build on vacant land.

In Frederick County, we recently passed the South Frederick Corridors Plan. This redevelopment visionary document plans for a walkable neighborhood with access to the MARC train, a multi-modal transportation network and a diversity of housing options. This area alone is planned to add 10,000 new housing units. However, it is not easy to take an existing network and convert it to accommodate this vision. Private developers are not going to invest in a project that costs more to build and has the same profit outcome.

That is why this bill is so vital. The ability of jurisdictions to utilize Industrial Development Authority funds for investment in redevelopment projects is exactly the catalyst needed to finally overcome the increased costs associated with upgrading existing infrastructure. I urge the Committee to support this bill and give their constituents the tools needed to bring their visions to life.

Thank you for the opportunity to lend support to this important legislation.

Sincerely,

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