

HOWARD COUNTY HOUSING AFFORDABILITY COALITION

Testimony on Senate Bill 430

March 4, 2025

Mr. Brian Feldman, Chair
Ms. Cheryl Kagan, Vice Chair
Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee members,

The Howard County Housing Affordability Coalition is composed of 44 organizations and over 900 individual members and allies. The Coalition works to achieve community understanding, policy making and regulatory decisions that will lead to an increase in—and equitable access to—Howard County affordable housing.

The Coalition strongly supports the Administration's "Housing for Jobs Act" (SB430). This legislation will spur much needed home building for all Marylanders especially for the 1 in 3 residents who are cost burdened by their rent or mortgage.

The underlying reason for the State's unaffordability crisis is the lack of supply of homes near jobs. Based on 2022 data the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development estimates that the Baltimore Region is almost 90,000 homes short of having what is considered an economically healthy ratio of 1.5 jobs to 1 housing unit. To help resolve this regional housing infrastructure gap, Howard County will need to produce 11,600 new housing units. To put the magnitude of this production challenge into perspective, in 2023 only about 450 new homes were sold in the County and in 2024 no new multi-family rental units were added.

To help meet the State's, our Region's and our County's housing infrastructure challenges, the Coalition supports SB430's foundational basis that local jurisdictions have an obligation to approve new housing units unless there is a reason for denial that outweighs the community's need for housing. The legislation's enhanced reduction incentive will be of significant value in helping Howard County meet its recently established General Plan target of developing 340 new affordable units per year. We also support the flexibility SB430 provides to local jurisdictions in not requiring zoning law changes and providing exceptions that allow local governments to not approve a proposed housing project—for example, a negative impact on water or sewer facilities or insufficient school capacity.

The housing generated by this bill will be an important step in creating a more affordable and financially stronger Howard County and Maryland. Significant numbers of new housing units will help drive down rental and homeownership costs for residents which should in turn generate an expanded economic base of new businesses and jobs.

The Coalition requests that the Education, Energy and Environment Committee issue a favorable report on SB430.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jackie Eng

Jackie Eng, Coalition Coordinator

Cc: Senator Katie Fry Hester