

January 17, 2025

The Honorable Delegate Ben Barnes
Appropriations Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support for Senate Bill 235 – Housing and Community Development – Project Restore Program – Establishment

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,

On behalf of Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), I am writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 235 (SB0235), the “Housing and Community Development – Project Restore Program – Establishment.” This legislation is a critical measure aimed at revitalizing under-resourced communities and addressing economic and housing inequities, particularly those affecting Latino and immigrant populations across Maryland.

The Latino community represents over 12% of Maryland’s population, yet continues to face disproportionate housing cost burdens and economic barriers. SB0235 proposes to:

- **Expand Affordable Housing:** The program’s focus on rehabilitating vacant and underutilized properties will increase the availability of safe and affordable housing. Over 40% of Latino households in Maryland currently experience severe housing cost burdens, highlighting the urgent need for this initiative (Maryland Housing Needs Assessment, 2023).
- **Stimulate Local Economies:** By funding property restoration, the program creates jobs and supports local businesses, including those owned by Latino entrepreneurs, thus contributing to long-term economic growth.
- **Enhance Community Infrastructure:** Investments in distressed neighborhoods will lead to improved public services and infrastructure, fostering vibrant communities where families can thrive.

MLU has consistently advocated for policies that promote equity, inclusion, and economic empowerment for all Marylanders. SB0235 aligns with these values by addressing systemic inequities in housing and economic opportunities while providing the tools necessary for underserved communities to prosper.

We strongly urge the members of the Appropriations Committee to support this important legislation. By advancing SB0235, Maryland demonstrates its commitment to building inclusive and equitable communities for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.
Communications and Public Affairs Specialist

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