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BILL: Senate Bill 0235 - Housing and Community Development - Project Restore Program - Establishment

DATE: January 21, 2025

POSITION: FAVORABLE

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

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Annapolis Pride's mission is to advocate for, empower, and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community in Anne Arundel County to live fully and authentically. Our vision is a safe, equitable, and anti-racist community where people of all identities thrive.

As such, the Board of Directors of Annapolis Pride **supports** Senate Bill 235, establishing the Project Restore Program within the Department of Housing and Community Development; to distribute Program funds to place-based community development organizations and units of local governments; and to distribute subgrants.

This legislation will ensure that there are resources available to not only support small businesses but also support sustainable development which benefits all community members. Maryland's LGBT Chamber of Commerce has a membership of almost 100 businesses. LGBT-owned businesses positioned all over the state are working hard to ensure that our local and economic business centers continue to thrive as we build stronger communities, where members of ALL communities are represented and have space to contribute fully to the ever-changing world.

According to the HRC 22% of LGBTQ adults live below the poverty line (compared to 16% of non-LGBTQ adults). These community members benefit from being able to live and work in thriving communities and revitalized areas. A keystone of Sustainable Communities is to be located near a town center or transit center, which may provide benefits to communities like the LGBTQ+ community as proximity to transit centers ensures that community members can get to and from essential services.

Further, Annapolis Pride has been a key stakeholder within Anne Arundel County's sustainable development plan, to ensure that members of our community, commonly overlooked, have a voice at the table. We know the benefits of sustainable development will benefit all of Maryland's communities.

Accordingly, Annapolis Pride respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on Senate Bill 235.