



Testimony SB 944
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
February 25, 2025
Position: FAVORABLE

Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland's community development sector and serves nearly 200 member organizations. CDN—focuses on small affordable housing developers, housing counseling agencies and community-based non-profits across the state of Maryland. The mission of CDN is to promote, strengthen and advocate for the community development sector throughout Maryland's urban, suburban and rural communities.

SB 944 – Requiring local jurisdictions to make monthly reports to the Department of Planning regarding housing development permits issued by the local jurisdiction relating to housing development permits.

Ensuring that all families live in affordable, stable homes will improve community health outcomes, thereby reducing health care and education costs. Housing is an urgent priority for economic growth. Building a firm foundation for stable homes begins with policies that increase the production of housing affordable to households making less than \$65,000 per year. Given the health, educational, and cost implications of families living in unstable homes, there is an urgent need to increase supply of affordable homes throughout the state.

Opposition to affordable housing tends to relate to increased traffic; additional school costs; increased demands on other municipal services, such as fire and police; stresses on water and sewer systems; concerns about developer quality or experience; decreases in property values; various types of environmental degradation; and, perhaps least tangible of all, adverse changes in the character of the town. These claims may often mask underlying biases and racist attitudes.

Contrary to common assumptions, several studies have consistently found that, if affordable housing is well designed, fits in with the surrounding neighborhood, and is well managed, there appear to be no negative impacts of that housing on the property values of neighboring houses. Other studies have shown that population growth associated with new affordable housing does not necessarily yield higher municipal costs, and there is actually less increase in school costs related to the construction of multifamily developments than there is with new single-family

houses. However, there have been few, if any, studies comparing the specific controversies that surface prior to a development with the outcomes of the developments in question.

SB 944 respects the autonomy of Maryland's counties, empowering local governments to openly be transparent about housing permitting. This bill holds jurisdictions accountable for the decisions that they make. Our members need streamlined zoning and permitting processes.

We urge a favorable report for Senate Bill 944.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director