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DATE: February 4, 2025

BILL NO.: House Bill 286

TITLE: Local Comprehensive Planning and State Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy – Planning Principles

COMMITTEE: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Letter of Support

Description of Bill:

House Bill 286 amends the state’s current 12 Planning Visions and State Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy with an updated set of 8 Planning Principles.

Background and Analysis:

Maryland’s Planning Visions and Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy were last amended in 2009. This list of 12 visions lays out the general principles to be followed by local planning commissions when developing comprehensive plans and addresses a range of topics from public participation and quality of life to housing, economic development, and resource conservation.

House Bill 286 updates this list to reflect the evolution of state policy to support sustainable growth goals, rather than the outdated smart growth policy reflected in the existing list. The new list of 8 Planning Principles was developed by the Maryland Department of Planning after engagement with, and feedback from, local planning commissions across the state. The updated Planning Principles also align more closely with the Moore-Miller Administration’s priorities such as equity, housing, transportation, and economic development. More closely aligning state and local planning goals and priorities will help DHCD and other state agencies address issues such as the affordable housing shortage, the racial wealth gap, and anemic economic growth.

In particular, the addition of equity as a Planning Principle will require local planning authorities to use inclusive planning processes that prioritize underserved populations and areas most in need of capital investment. Local planning authorities have significant power to address issues of equity in areas of life that most impact Marylanders -- such as housing -- and prioritizing equity in planning closely aligns with DHCD’s recently adopted Just Communities framework. Similarly, the addition of resilience as a Planning Principle helps to address and mitigate the potential impacts of climate change and other natural and human-caused threats, allowing Maryland to continue to be a leader both in righting the wrongs of the past and addressing future risks.

DHCD Position

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 286.

