



Testimony to the Environment & Transportation Committee
HB 503 – Housing for Jobs Act
Position: Favorable (FAV)

The Housing for Jobs Act provides three key benefits that will transform Maryland's development environment for affordable housing: 1) It provides concrete data on the scale of the crisis; 2) It compels local governments to be pro-active in meeting the housing needs of their communities; and 3) It narrows the scope of reasons a project may be denied.

First, Maryland needs housing targets. We've spent the past two sessions talking about the housing crisis, but we are lacking geographic context. Housing is not fungible. We know that an abundance of housing in Baltimore City does not resolve unaffordable housing prices in Howard County. This bill makes the housing needs of each jurisdiction clear and actionable.

Second, this bill will encourage local governments to be proactive in soliciting housing development to meet the needs of its constituents. Our members know that the best government partners in building affordable housing are those who are motivated to see the project through. We cannot allow the status quo of our counties and cities being, at best, passive recipients of development and, at worse, adversaries of critically needed housing. Closing the housing gaps identified in this bill restores local control and is a necessary incentive to bring local governments to the table.

Third, the reasons affordable housing projects have been denied or delayed would fill an afternoon. But if we were to go through those instances, we would miss the larger picture, which is those projects that are never proposed in the first place because of closed schools or some other known obstacle that affordable housing developers cannot take a risk on stopping the project. No one chooses not to move to an area because the schools are overcrowded. In fact, many of our most overcrowded schools are, not coincidentally, some of the highest performing schools in the country. And ***these are the schools*** that adequate public facility regulations have decided will be inaccessible to new affordable housing. The Housing for Jobs Act would prompt a more holistic approach that examines the school capacity of the entire locality, and will not allow the continuation of a system that allows destiny to be set by zip code.

This is an important and necessary bill. The existing regulatory environment, even with the passage of last year's Housing Expansion and Affordability Act, will not allow affordable housing developers to meet the housing needs of our most vulnerable.

MAHC is the leading organization for the affordable rental housing industry in Maryland and represents over 185 member organizations, including nonprofit and for-profit developers, community action groups, State and local housing authorities, property management companies, financial institutions, community development organizations, contractors, investors, consultants and individuals. **We urge your full support of HB 503 as proposed.**



Respectfully submitted on March 4, 2025 by Miranda Darden-Willems, Executive Director, on behalf of the MAHC Board of Directors.

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