



House Bill 489 – Maryland Department of Labor - Study on Building Code Requirements for Single-Staircase Buildings

Position: Support

Maryland REALTORS® supports efforts to increase the supply of housing options in Maryland. HB 489, which would require study of single staircase building options, would assist with that process.

Maryland currently faces a shortage of nearly 150,000 housing units and growing. This shortage impacts not just low-income residents, but also those of moderate incomes, young professionals, seniors, and working families. It encompasses both what has been traditionally considered as “affordable housing” but now also Missing Middle Housing types.

Single staircase building designs allow construction of new residential buildings, typically above three stories, with only one exit stairway. These are typically accompanied by additional fire safety features. There are several documented positives in terms of building aesthetics, energy efficiency and sense of community. But there are important financial considerations as well: removing the requirement for a second stairwell could cut construction costs by 15 to 25 percent and open undeveloped small- to mid-sized parcels to housing options that are not currently feasible under current regulations. It also makes adaptive reuse of existing structures more cost effective.

There is no single answer to this housing shortage. Rather, it will take many modest actions that when taken together begin to make a difference. Maryland officials at both the state and local levels will need to work closely with one another and seek new and innovative ways of providing the housing that our residents need. The status quo is no longer an option.

Maryland REALTORS® applauds efforts to ease our housing crisis and reduce our current 150,000-unit housing shortage. To do that, we ask for your support of House Bill 489.

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