



Anne Arundel Affordable Housing Coalition

HB 503 and SB 430

Land Use - Regional Housing Infrastructure Gap (Housing for Jobs Act)

Position: Support

The Anne Arundel Affordable Housing Coalition (AAAHC) supports the Housing for Jobs Act and urges a Favorable report on HB 503 and SB 430.

AAAHC is a coalition of over 50 organizations who promote and advise on affordable housing policy and programs in Anne Arundel County. Our membership includes over 50 organizations, including virtually all the major public and private developers, owners, managers and funders of affordable housing and nonprofit providers of services to lower income affordable housing residents in the County. Our Board consists of the leadership of many of these key organizations and provides a high level of experience and expertise to the County. We are extremely proud of the progress that Anne Arundel County has made in recent years to facilitate, encourage and create affordable housing. The Housing for Jobs Act will further increase and provide State support for affordable housing in Maryland and provide new opportunities for the County to further the construction and rehabilitation of such housing.

The AAAHC supports the bill for several reasons. It furthers and shows the important connection between jobs and housing. The economic impact of housing construction in creating jobs, and the need for counties to have housing for low and moderate workers, who are essential to the County's workforce, is key.

The bill also provides a way for counties to have clear numerical goals they should strive to achieve and relates these goals to jobs. Elsewhere in the country many places have used the setting of jurisdictional goals around a fair share numerical approach to push and measure progress in meeting affordable housing goals. This is a breakthrough approach for Maryland to join and we congratulate the Governor for pushing this idea.

One aspect of the bill of particular importance is the help it will provide for developers in dealing with restrictions due to school capacity conditions and requirements. This is often a major roadblock in counties that do not, like Anne Arundel County, have Adequate Public Facility adjacency provisions and/or exemptions for affordable units in

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their laws. Also, giving incentives to affordable housing in locations near transit centers is an important objective in the bill.

Finally, the bill presents a clear mandate to jurisdictions to recognize that they all have a shared obligation to carefully consider and encourage affordable housing developments and not simply reject them arbitrarily.

This bill is a good step forward, but there are some concerns. One is that some of the exceptions listed in the bill seem rather broad and regulations would be needed to further define them to eliminate confusion and debate.

Another issue is how the law would be implemented. The solution in the bill of a developer taking a rejected project to the courts is, to be honest, not very likely. For a developer this is expensive, very time consuming, and likely to create jurisdictional ill will for the developer with future or existing projects in that locality. On the other hand, perhaps for the jurisdictions, it would cause them to be more careful and accepting before rejecting a project since the bill does provide developers an option they may not have now, even if it is not likely to be used often. Finding ways to strengthen or broaden the enforcement provision beyond only developers going to court, might need to be considered if this is found to be a problem over time.

In conclusion, the AAAHC supports the bill, appreciates the State's effort to strengthen the obligations of jurisdictions to facilitate affordable housing and set forth goals for them. This is a real step forward and we hope it will be enacted.

We urge a favorable report.

Submitted by
Trudy McFall, Chair
on behalf of the AAAHC Board