

HB0503_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
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TESTIMONY ON HB#0503 – FAVORABLE
Land Use - Regional Housing Infrastructure Gap (Housing for Jobs Act)

TO: Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0503, Land Use - Regional Housing Infrastructure Gap (Housing for Jobs Act)

This bill recognizes that there is a shortage of affordable housing that contributes to a lack of employees who, unable to find housing, cannot fill jobs in jurisdictions where they cannot find a place to live.

Cities, towns, and counties in many regions could benefit from tackling local housing challenges on a regional basis. While regional collaboration can often be challenging, a regional perspective can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the economic conditions that contribute to local housing needs. Additionally, regional approaches offer opportunities for localities within a region to align strategies and share resources, staff, and knowledge to more effectively address shared housing challenges; this is especially true for smaller localities that might benefit from pooling funding, expertise, and other resources on a regional level. Regional approaches can take many shapes, such as the implementation of a single policy or program by two or more jurisdictions, or a more comprehensive approach involving the development and implementation of a regional housing strategy. ... [this document] describe[s] ways localities can use regional approaches to address housing challenges and profile specific examples of successful regional collaboration. ¹

The Centralina Regional Council in Charlotte, North Carolina, has documented the problems this lack of housing can create in a community. ²

¹ <https://localhousingsolutions.org/plan/addressing-housing-challenges-on-a-regional-basis/>

² <https://centralina.org/blog/the-role-of-regionalism-in-affordable-housing/>

As the gap between housing construction and demand continues to widen across the United States, many local communities are faced with housing shortages. In turn, homeowners and renters alike are experiencing significant affordability challenges. The affordable housing crisis impacts everyone by perpetuating inequities, diminishing quality of life of residents and threatening the economy by limiting equal opportunity access. Local officials are motivated to address these shortages to halt these negative outcomes in their communities.

This bill starts a process in Maryland to resolve some of these issues. It plans to accomplish that goal by requiring the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Department of Planning to calculate certain regional housing infrastructure gaps. The problem's parameters should be established before we can work on any solutions. The bill then provides for the apportionment of regional housing infrastructure gaps to counties and incorporated municipalities. It works by then authorizing local jurisdictions to reduce local housing infrastructure gaps in a certain manner. It establishes that certain local jurisdictions have an affirmative obligation to expeditiously approve housing development project applications.

We must apply regional and local solutions to the lack of housing across the state. This bill will facilitate those processes.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0503.