



HB 503: Land Use - Regional Housing Infrastructure Gap (Housing for Jobs Act)

Testimony of the Maryland Independent Living Network

SUPPORT

House Environment and Transportation Committee, March 4, 2025

The Maryland Independent Living Network is a coalition of the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council and the seven Maryland-based Centers for Independent Living (CIL). CILs are created by federal law. CILs work to enhance the civil rights and quality of services for people with disabilities. There are seven CILs located throughout Maryland, operated by and for people with disabilities. CILs provide Information and Referral, Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living Skills training, and Transition Services to individuals with disabilities in their communities.

The Independent Living Network submits this written testimony in **support** of HB 503.

HB 503 requires the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Department of Planning to calculate regional housing infrastructure gaps. Furthermore, HB 503 provides for the apportionment of regional housing infrastructure gaps to counties and incorporated municipalities and authorizes local jurisdictions to reduce local housing infrastructure gaps. Additionally, HB 503 establishes that local jurisdictions have an affirmative obligation to expeditiously approve housing development project applications.

HB 503 builds on the gubernatorial-sponsored package of housing bills enacted in 2024. HB 503 encourages the production of more housing near areas where jobs are located.

The bill requires the Department of Housing & Community Development and the Department of Planning to publish a jobs-housing ratio that describes how many jobs a community has relative to the number of homes it has. It is assumed that most households have one or two wage-earners. Research shows that people willing to work can't find housing near where they work. As a consequence, demand increases home prices and people are forced into long commutes. Accordingly, Maryland's goal is to get each region of the state to about 1.5 jobs per house.

Local jurisdictions would retain the ability to reject housing development in certain circumstances. Local jurisdictions would be required to tell homebuilders why they're being denied; homebuilders could then appeal that decision in Circuit Court.

HB 503 doesn't change local zoning or permitting procedures, but it is assumed that local jurisdictions will take steps to speed up the processing of new housing.

California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia have set goals and targets for housing production. Additionally, Virginia is considering a similar bill after an unsuccessful attempt last year.

The Maryland Independent Living Network recognizes the challenges of creating more housing, especially affordable and accessible housing. People with disabilities and older Marylanders must be involved in the development of new housing options so that affordability and accessibility are engrained in the process.

The Maryland Independent Living Network appreciates the consideration of these comments.

The Maryland Independent Living Network strongly **supports** HB 503 and urges a **favorable** report.

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