



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 4th, 2025

HB 503

**Land Use - Regional Housing Infrastructure Gap (Housing for Jobs Act)
Environment and Transportation Committee
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 503**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Land Use - Regional Housing Infrastructure Gap (Housing for Jobs Act) seeks to address the critical shortage of housing by requiring the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Department of Planning to assess and calculate regional housing infrastructure gaps. This legislation ensures that housing needs are equitably distributed across counties and municipalities, allowing local jurisdictions to take proactive steps to reduce these gaps. Additionally, the bill establishes an affirmative obligation for local governments to expeditiously approve housing development projects, ensuring that bureaucratic delays and unjustified denials do not further contribute to the housing crisis. By prohibiting local jurisdictions from rejecting housing projects without valid justifications, this legislation removes unnecessary barriers to housing development and promotes policies that prioritize the housing needs of communities.

Access to safe, stable, and affordable housing is a fundamental human right, and local governments have a moral obligation to remove obstacles that prevent individuals and families from securing adequate shelter. When housing infrastructure gaps go unaddressed, vulnerable populations, including low-income families, seniors, and essential workers—are disproportionately affected, leading to housing instability, economic hardship, and homelessness. By ensuring that housing projects move forward without undue obstruction, this legislation prioritizes the well-being of the most vulnerable members of society and creates a more just and equitable housing system.

At the community level, **House Bill 503** strengthens local economies and fosters social stability. When individuals and families have access to affordable housing near employment opportunities, schools, and essential services, they are better able to contribute to their communities, engage in the workforce, and build stable lives. Housing shortages not only exacerbate economic inequality but also create housing insecurity that disrupts family life, education, and public health. By addressing these gaps in housing infrastructure, Maryland can

promote economic growth, reduce displacement, and build stronger, more inclusive communities.

ensures that housing development is a priority and that local jurisdictions fulfill their responsibility to provide adequate housing options. Just as Catholic social teaching emphasizes the duty of governments to uphold the dignity and rights of all people, this bill calls on local leaders to act with urgency and fairness in approving housing projects. By streamlining housing approvals and eliminating unjustified denials, Maryland can create a future where every individual and family has access to safe, affordable, and dignified housing, ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of stable and sustainable communities.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 503**.