



TESTIMONY FOR HB0489 Maryland Department of Labor - Study on Building Code Requirements for Single-Staircase Buildings

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Stewart

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative

Coalition Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0339 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Within the last year, Governor Wes Moore identified housing as a priority, with an estimated shortage in Maryland of 96,000 units and growing. The state's housing crisis has resulted in over 5,000 unhoused people in Maryland, including 2,000 living as families, according to the World Population Review. This shortage has led to unjustifiable rent increases. Higher rents result in more homelessness and increases in other poverty markers. This is unacceptable to MLC members.

HB0489 builds on the housing legislation Governor Moore signed last year by assessing the feasibility of single-staircase buildings in multifamily units. Reducing barriers to multifamily housing development would increase the affordable housing supply. Specifically, the Maryland Department of Labor is tasked with conducting this study and making legislative and regulatory recommendations based on their findings by December 1, 2025.

The emphasis on higher-density housing does not mean that human elements would be compromised. Concepts to be evaluated by this effort include existing building codes and best practices, fire safety, water supply, and economic impact — within the context of urban development and adaptive reuse potential.

More multifamily housing units would be a powerful response to our housing shortage and affordability crisis.

The Maryland Legislative Coalition supports this bill and similar initiatives that help mitigate our housing problems.