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HB 0503

March 4, 2025

TO: Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 0503 - Land Use - Regional Housing Infrastructure Gap (Housing for Jobs Act)

POSITION: **Support with Amendments**

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) supports with amendments House Bill (HB) 0503.

HB 0503 would require the State's Housing and Planning Departments to calculate certain housing infrastructure gaps for different regions and pass the information on to local governments. If a local jurisdiction has a housing infrastructure gap greater than 1, the local jurisdiction will have an "affirmative obligation to expeditiously approve" any housing development project application. The local jurisdiction cannot disapprove a housing project application unless it provides a justification that "clearly outweighs the need for housing" supported by clear and convincing evidence. The local jurisdictions must articulate one of several narrow reasons for any denial. The law also details the developer's recourse in court to challenge the denial and a court could order that the local jurisdiction approve the development.

It is unclear where Baltimore would fall on the "jobs-to-housing-ratio" and there are several factors unique to Baltimore City including a significant number of vacant properties, a slightly shrinking population, a large number of jobs held by commuters, a remote workforce and multiple job holders living within one-unit.

The BCA supports the amendments being requested by the Maryland Association of Counties and looks forward to continuing to work with state DHCD to ensure Baltimore City's concerns are addressed. One specific amendment being requested by the BCA would be to clarify language regarding the implementation timeline. It is currently unclear whether the local jurisdictions would be required to begin compliance with HB 503 upon receipt of the report as provided by state DHCD in 12-201.(B). As the effective date of the bill is January 1, 2026 and the report must be sent no later than January 1st of each year, there would likely need to be additional time provided for the jurisdictions to review the report and ensure compliance.

The state Department of Housing and Community Development has been an excellent partner to the BCA and we look forward to ensuring that we continue working together to reduce the number of vacant properties within Baltimore City as well as continue to develop affordable housing for our residents.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully urges a **favorable with amendments** report on HB 0503.