

January 21, 2025

The Honorable Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Chair, Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support for House Bill 90 – Housing and Community Development – Project Restore Program – Establishment

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

On behalf of Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), I am writing to express our strong support for House Bill 90 (HB0090), titled "Housing and Community Development – Project Restore Program – Establishment." This legislation aims to establish the Project Restore Program within the Department of Housing and Community Development, authorizing the Department to distribute Program funds to certain place-based community development organizations and units of local governments. The Program is designed to provide financial support to revitalize vacant retail and commercial spaces, fostering economic growth and community development.

The establishment of the Project Restore Program is a significant step toward revitalizing underutilized spaces, stimulating local economies, and creating job opportunities. By providing financial incentives to small businesses and nonprofit organizations to occupy vacant properties, this program will help rejuvenate commercial corridors, reduce blight, and enhance the quality of life in our communities.

For Latino and immigrant communities, which often face systemic barriers to economic opportunities, the Project Restore Program offers a pathway to entrepreneurship and economic empowerment. By facilitating access to affordable commercial spaces, HB0090 enables aspiring business owners from diverse backgrounds to establish and grow their enterprises, contributing to the economic diversity and resilience of Maryland's neighborhoods.

MLU has consistently advocated for initiatives that promote equitable economic development and support for underrepresented communities. We believe that HB0090 aligns with these objectives by addressing the challenges of vacant properties and fostering inclusive growth.

We respectfully urge the members of the Ways and Means Committee to issue a favorable report on HB0090 and advance this critical legislation. By doing so, Maryland can continue to build vibrant, inclusive communities where all residents have the opportunity to thrive.

Sincerely,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.
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