



Testimony of the Mayor and Council of Rockville
HB 168 – Housing and Community Development – Affordable Housing – Educator
Workforce Housing and Municipal Corporations
SUPPORT

Good afternoon, Chair Valderrama and members of the House Economic Matters Committee. I am Rockville City Mayor Monique Ashton, and I thank you for this opportunity. On behalf of the city, I want to thank Delegate Vogel for sponsoring this important legislation that aligns with Rockville’s goal to increase workforce housing. We have been working together to discuss the specific needs of housing for teachers and school system employees to expand affordable and accessible options.

The Mayor and Council of Rockville unanimously support HB 168. This bill strengthens Maryland’s ability to produce and finance affordable housing designated for teachers and other local school system employees by making educator workforce housing an eligible use of many Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) financing tools and by expanding eligibility for the Housing Innovation Fund and Housing Innovation Pilot Program to include municipal corporations and county boards of education. This bill also adds educator workforce housing as an allowable project type under the Neighborhood and Community Assistance Program.

Rockville schools, like schools across the country, are competing for staff and to choose the honorable profession of educating our children. There are nearly 1,000 teacher vacancies in Maryland. When educators can’t live near the communities they serve, districts face higher turnover and vacancy rates, longer commutes that reduce retention, and difficulty recruiting early-career teachers. The Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis found that high teacher turnover disrupts student learning, leading to lower academic achievement in math and English Language Arts, particularly in high-poverty schools. Students experience decreased continuity of instruction, increased behavioral issues and disciplinary actions, reduced emotional stability, and difficulty building necessary, consistent relationships with educators. House Bill 168 addresses this by aligning housing finance tools with workforce reality and opening a practical path to develop housing through public land, partnerships, and innovative finance. This bill would enable us to collaborate on efforts to support teacher housing in Rockville, the County seat, and a central, transit-oriented location.

HB168 unlocks public sites and partnerships by clarifying that educator workforce housing can be developed on land, sites, or buildings acquired by county boards of education and supported through DHCD financial assistance. By broadening who can use state innovation tools, HB 168 expands opportunities to help close financing gaps and move projects from concept to construction. And, importantly, the bill creates additional pathways beyond traditional Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)—only production, by allowing projects to qualify for the Housing Innovation Pilot Program if any portion of units are set aside for educator workforce housing.

In conclusion, HB 168 is a pragmatic workforce housing bill: it makes educator housing explicitly eligible across state tools, expands eligible public partners, and improves project feasibility. For these reasons, we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report. Thank you.