



Howard County Council

George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043-4392

Christiana Rigby
Councilmember

District 3

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB548

Land Use - Permitting - Development Rights (Maryland Housing Certainty Act)

February 19, 2026

Dear Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I write in strong support of HB548, legislation that would reduce regulatory uncertainty and unnecessary costs that hinder the development of housing in Maryland. Addressing our state's housing shortage requires thoughtful, balanced reforms that encourage housing production while maintaining appropriate local planning authority, and this bill represents an important step toward that goal.

In my two terms on the Howard County Council, I have consistently heard from housing creators about the challenges created by our current regulatory framework. As a "late vesting" state, Maryland allows land use regulations to change even after a development application has been submitted or approvals have been granted. This creates significant uncertainty, increases financial risk, and discourages investment in new housing. These conditions can result in delayed or abandoned projects, or increased housing costs when projects do move forward. The Housing Certainty Act's proposal to vest land use rights at the time a complete application is submitted would provide much-needed predictability.

This legislation also addresses the burden of upfront impact fees and development excise taxes. In Howard County, due to our Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance, many projects must wait several years before construction can begin, yet developers are required to pay all fees upon approval. This significantly increases financing costs and can render otherwise viable projects infeasible.

While locally, we have made vital progress in Howard County by instituting the state's strictest forest conservation and energy efficiency standards, layering these regulations on projects already in the pipeline creates a moving target that ultimately drives up costs for homebuyers. This is why early vesting rights and the Maryland Housing Certainty Act (HB548) are so essential; they provide the regulatory predictability needed to ensure that well-planned projects can move forward without being stalled by mid-stream legislative changes. By balancing high standards with common-sense certainty, we protect both our environmental goals and our commitment to housing affordability.

Eighteen states currently have early vesting statutes, and evidence from these jurisdictions indicates that such policies can stimulate housing production and help stabilize or reduce housing costs. Maryland's housing shortage is well documented, and meaningful action is necessary to increase supply if we are to remain a competitive and affordable place to live and work.

For these reasons, I strongly support the Housing Certainty Act and urge the Committee to advance HB548. Providing greater certainty and reducing unnecessary barriers to development will help Maryland build the homes our residents need, strengthen our economy, and ensure that families across the state have access to safe and affordable housing.

Thank you for your consideration. I respectfully request a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christiana Rigby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christiana Rigby
Howard County Councilmember, District 3