



Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony: HB1137 Land Use - Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments - Authorization (Bring Back Main Street Act)

Organization: Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County, MD

Submitting: Laura Salganik, Chair

Position: FAVORABLE

Hearing Date: March 5, 2026

Dear Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County, we submit testimony in strong support of the Bring Back Main Street Act. This legislation provides a practical approach to addressing Maryland’s housing shortage while revitalizing underused commercial properties.

The Bring Back Main Street Act requires certain counties, including Howard County, to allow multifamily and mixed-use developments as a permitted use on commercially zoned parcels, particularly vacant or underutilized strip malls. By allowing these projects to move forward without lengthy zoning approvals—so long as they meet standard site plan requirements and are served by existing water and sewer infrastructure—the bill removes unnecessary barriers to housing production and reduces regulatory costs.

These reforms are essential. Maryland currently faces a housing shortage of approximately 96,000 units, a gap that will continue to grow without meaningful action to streamline development. Repurposing existing commercial sites allows communities to add housing more quickly and efficiently while making better use of existing infrastructure.

Mixed-use developments also help create more walkable, connected neighborhoods that serve residents across generations, including young professionals and seniors who wish to age in place near services and amenities.

We respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB1137.