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SB 0267

February 17, 2026

TO: Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

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

RE: Senate Bill SB 267 Land Use - Residential Housing - Oversight, Regulation, and Taxation (Building Affordably in My Back Yard Act)

POSITION: LOI

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) is submitting the following **Letter of Information** on Senate Bill (SB) 267.

In its current form SB 0267 would address 15 distinct areas of the development landscape in order to promote the creation of additional affordable housing throughout the State. The proposed changes are related to oversight, regulation and taxation, and seek to create uniformity and expediency through new guidelines and timelines.

The intent is to address the affordable housing shortage by taking a multi-faceted approach. SB 267 covers a wide range of topics, some of which BCA can support, like the creation of a State landlord registry. The registry would require landlords in Maryland to file an annual certificate with the Department of Housing and Community Development identifying a sworn public contact, which DHCD must share with local governments upon request. Baltimore City already has a local registry requirement but still struggles to connect with certain property owners from time to time. A statewide system might help with that.

The BCA opposes regulating permit approvals at the State level and instead favors local data driven solutions to fast-tracking approval pathways. Baltimore is already working diligently to make improvements to our existing permitting system to make all permits process as quickly as possible. As an example, the median number of days to issue a residential permit went from 3 days in October of 2025 to 2 days in January of 2026 based off system improvements during that time. We move reviews and permits as quickly as possible, no matter the type of project. A fast-track process for certain projects could create equity concerns. Additionally, this Bill would require adjustments to our permitting and tracking system to hold approvals open for up to three years. In Baltimore, the vast majority of permits are for 6 months, large projects are issued for 12-24 months. Permit extensions can be filed 30 days prior to expiration up to 90 days after expiration. We

generally do not limit the number of extensions as long as there is progress. There are some cases where we have denied extensions because there is no work in progress and the property has become a nuisance as defined by City laws and regulations.

It is difficult to estimate what system changes might be needed, and the cost. Finally, regulatory and construction certainty is not a major problem in Baltimore City, we are not moving the goal post on developers or projects, we are working together to try to streamline and improve the process.

The BCA opposes pre-approved permit applications. We are undertaking our own efforts to fast-track approval pathways. The BCA is in the process of standing up the Bmore FAST Initiative (Facilitating Approvals and Streamlining Timelines) which represents a comprehensive modernization of how Baltimore handles development approvals. This initiative aims to make Baltimore one of the most efficient cities in America for development, while maintaining our commitment to safety and community interests, particularly in those neighborhoods that have faced intentional historic disinvestment. Recent upgrades to the City's permitting system aim to escalate the pace of all permits.

The BCA opposes Housing Production Targets. Baltimore has a very permissive zoning code and there's no shortage of opportunity for development. We acknowledge the need and usefulness of data driven decision making but also recognize the impact of market conditions beyond local or State control.

Baltimore is not the target jurisdiction of this Bill and there is no need for project design guidelines for affordable units, § 12-403, this would prohibit local jurisdictions from Qualified Affordable Housing Projects having any of the typical zoning controls applied (Max heights, setbacks, lot area, open space, landscaping, etc.). There is no reason for the State to control local development guidelines in Baltimore City as we are already a favorable location for expansion.

We support the intent of SB 267, but given it is a statewide piece of legislation, it does not consider many issues within the City of Baltimore and therefore would not be the best fit for the City. Baltimore is already reducing barriers to development and doesn't believe that the totality of directives contained within this Bill will significantly help expedite the production of affordable housing projects and could potentially disrupt work already in progress. The BCA supports the idea of creating additional affordable housing units however the Bill is quite broad and may have unintended consequences in the aim to override local jurisdictions' review processes.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests consideration of this **Letter of Information** on SB 0267.