

MGA Testimony for Bill HB691

Good afternoon members of the Committee.

My name is Yamil Hernández.

I serve on the Gaithersburg City Council, and am here to speak in support of HB691.

Let's zoom out for a second.

Maryland is not producing enough housing. The Governor has said it. The Comptroller has documented it, and I think we all agree.

And our housing shortage has *profound* consequences. It affects affordability, workforce attraction/retention, and the State's economic competitiveness.

One thing holding us back from producing "Moore" housing is *permitting*.

When building new homes, the longer and more uncertain the state permitting process is, the more expensive projects become.

That discourages investment and production of the housing our residents so desperately need.

When it comes to housing construction, time is money.

This Bill gives us a tool to address that problem at **zero added cost**.

I repeat, **Zero. Added. Cost.**

It does two things.

First, it adds **capacity and bandwidth**. State agencies are busy. This bill allows capable local governments, by mutual agreement w/the state, to step in and help with necessary housing permit reviews.

Second, it seeks to improve **state processes**, through coordination and oversight by the Governors Housing Ombudsman.

In short: this bill adds capacity and improves the process, without weakening environmental reviews, without lowering standards, and without costing taxpayers a dime.

It also has support from a variety of key stakeholders.

This is a practical step forward in our shared goal of increasing housing supply.

I respectfully ask for a favorable report. Thank you.