



## **Testimony to the House Environment and Transportation Committee**

### **SB 225 - Environment - Interjurisdictional Watersheds - Flood Management**

#### **Position: Unfavorable**

Good afternoon, members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns about SB 225. My name is Andrew Hanson, and I am the Vice President for Development at Homes for America. We are a nonprofit housing owner and developer based here in Annapolis serving the Mid-Atlantic region. We are focused every day on providing high quality affordable housing that is professionally managed and enhanced with services for low and moderate income families, seniors and persons with disabilities.

I am here to testify in opposition to this bill for two reasons. First, Maryland is already the most difficult state that we work in to develop housing. Citing data from the Comptroller's report last year on Housing & the Economy, Maryland is already the 6<sup>th</sup> most regulated state for residential development in the nation due to the volume of land use regulations that make projects complex, lengthy and expensive. The continual piling on of environmental and land use regulations both at the state and local level drives up costs and makes more projects infeasible, which is a key driver of our housing supply crisis. This is evident as Homes for America works on projects in other states; there is first hand stark contrasts on not only approval requirements but also the associated schedule with the time to be able to close on a transaction growing to usually well more than 2 years on Maryland projects.

The second reason is that we believe this legislation was introduced by the sponsor as a direct attack on one of our developments. Senator Mary Washington has been outspoken about her opposition to a modest sized affordable housing building we are constructing in Towson. A project that is protecting nearly 55% of the site in various easements including forest conversation, forest buffer or for the neighborhoods use all while providing stormwater management protection for the 100 year storm. I have spoken to engineers, reviewed the MDE testimony as well as the DLS Fiscal and Policy Note. The



engineers have stated that they do not understand the goal of the legislation. MDE stated that the bill “does not require any additional actions on the part of MDE.” The DLS Note states that it is not clear what requirements the bill would trigger. So, why is the legislature considering passing a bill that the experts can’t really find a purpose for? I would like to read from the DLS note on the last page: “...to the extent that the bill restricts development, particularly within the Herring Run (which is newly categorized as an interjurisdictional flood hazard watershed under the bill), there are potentially significant impacts on affected projects and businesses, including small businesses. However, any impact ultimately depends on any new development restrictions resulting from the bill, which cannot be predicted in advance.”

Given the Senator’s very public actions to oppose a desperately needed affordable housing development, I think it’s quite clear that the intent of the bill is to create more challenges for this project that has already taken 8 years to get underway. However this bill will also likely create hurdles for many other important and much needed affordable housing.

I urge you to vote no on SB 225.