

To the members of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Daniel Herriges, and I am the Policy Director at the Parking Reform Network. We are an international organization dedicated to educating the public about parking policy and accelerating parking reforms. I am writing today specifically to urge you to pass Senate Bill 389 and to support its provisions prohibiting local parking mandates near rail transit facilities.

Minimum parking regulations prescribe an arbitrary amount of parking for each new development, which is not based on an assessment of the actual need or market demand. The expense of building this parking is passed on to tenants and customers; each parking stall can raise the monthly rent of an apartment by \$200 or more. And that doesn't account for the homes that are simply not built because parking requirements make a project financially or physically impossible.

In a housing affordability crisis, Maryland cannot afford the considerable barrier that parking mandates pose to new housing supply. Especially in transit-supported locations where residents might wish to save money by owning fewer cars or even no car.

Prohibiting minimum parking requirements within walking distance of train stations is a focused and measured approach, in line with reforms that many cities and states have enacted. In the past five years, California, Colorado, and Illinois have passed very similar laws that preclude municipalities from setting arbitrary parking quotas in transit-adjacent locations.

Over 110 U.S. cities and towns have taken the further step of wholly eliminating these unscientific and costly parking mandates in all locations, including such places as Austin, Texas; Raleigh and Durham, North Carolina; Portland, Oregon; Denver, Colorado; and recently, the city of Baltimore.

This reform is tried and tested, and it is not new or risky ground for Maryland.

Eliminating parking mandates does not eliminate parking. It does not prohibit anyone from building parking. In California, following a 2022 state law very similar to SB 389, UCLA researchers found that many residential builders still intended to provide considerable parking even at sites where the law exempted them from doing so, because they viewed it as an important amenity and because their lenders expected it.

Parking reform does, however, restore to owners the flexibility to determine their own parking needs, and to weigh parking appropriately against other goals. Goals like housing, affordable local services like child care, the viability of mom-and-pop businesses, or additional green space that can absorb flood water and reduce dangerous summer heat.

Where these reforms are already in place, evidence shows that the change that occurs is gradual, incremental, and positive. In Buffalo and Seattle, in the wake of major parking reforms, about three-quarters of new buildings continued to have parking. But about 60 percent of the

new homes permitted in these cities were in buildings that would have been illegal under the prior code.

Renters who want an apartment without having to pay for a parking space they won't use now have that option. Local businesses can now open on small lots or in revitalized older buildings, where it would have previously been illegal due to lack of on-site parking.

Opponents will argue that this bill represents an infringement on local control of land use. Quite the contrary: local parking quotas themselves represent unwarranted micromanagement of private land-use decisions, based on no substantial evidence or compelling public interest. It is appropriate for the state to establish reasonable guardrails on local zoning excesses. The State of Maryland, furthermore, has an interest in protecting the economic potential of the substantial transit assets that Maryland has invested in. Parking reform is a modest step that can encourage transit-supportive investment and development near these assets.

Finally, Maryland is in a housing crisis. Housing markets do not respect municipal borders. The state's role in ensuring that enough housing can be built to meet present and future demand and stabilize the cost of living is, again, essential and appropriate.

Our cities and towns should not be in the business of micromanaging decisions about parking. SB 389 is an important step toward restoring flexibility and reducing wasteful parking mandates.