



Howard County Council

George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043-4392

Christiana Rigby
Councilmember

District 3

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB389

Land Use - Transit-Oriented Development - Alterations (Maryland Transit and Housing Opportunity Act)

February 17, 2026

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I write in support, with amendments, of SB389, the Maryland Transit & Housing Opportunity Act, to help implement successful transit-oriented development (TOD) across the State.

Senate Bill 389 makes it easier to build and fund successful mixed-use development projects adjacent to transit facilities. In a time of tremendous need for economic growth and affordable housing, the benefits of leveraging the over 300 acres of State-owned land near transit are immense. MDOT estimates that its land in the Baltimore region and along the MARC Penn Line could generate 7,000 housing units and \$1.4 billion in state and local tax revenue. However, the barriers around zoning and finance are real. MDOT estimates that current restrictive zoning on transit-adjacent, state-owned land in the Baltimore region alone is preventing 2,700 housing units from being built.

Maryland faces a housing shortage of approximately 100,000 units, and the rising cost of living continues to put pressure on families across the State. Leveraging underutilized land near high-capacity transit stations is a practical step toward increasing supply while making better use of existing infrastructure. By addressing both zoning and financing barriers, SB389 has the potential to unlock new housing opportunities, stimulate economic activity, and advance sustainable, transit-supportive growth.

Importantly, many of these provisions align with what local jurisdictions have already identified in their comprehensive plans: that transit-oriented development areas are appropriate locations for denser housing and growth. These reforms will reduce development costs, support denser and more walkable communities, and improve project feasibility while supporting county and state budget demands. Additionally, prioritizing development on MDOT-owned land presents an opportunity to transform underutilized state assets into vibrant housing and economic centers. Programs like revolving loan funds ensure that projects can move ahead and give governments a seat at the table for these housing initiatives.

At the same time, I have reservations about the broad expansion of Enterprise Zone designations to all state-designated TOD areas. While Enterprise Zones can be valuable economic development tools, expansion should be carefully targeted to communities with demonstrated need and implemented with strong local input. Broadly extending these benefits may dilute their effectiveness and reduce flexibility for smaller jurisdictions like Howard County. I would prefer a range of local options, such as the land value tax reforms proposed by Delegate Stewart and Senator Rosapepe in HB78 / SB457, that allow jurisdictions to tailor incentives to specific market conditions and community goals.

Despite these concerns, I believe this legislation provides meaningful tools to incentivize housing production near transit, improve affordability, and align land use with transportation investments. With thoughtful implementation and continued collaboration between the State and local governments, this Act can help Maryland meet its housing needs while advancing smart growth principles.

Thank you for your consideration. I respectfully request a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christiana Rigby". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Christiana Rigby
Howard County Councilmember, District 3