

SPONSOR TESTIMONY

HB 176 - State Department of Assessments and Taxation and Department of General Services - Property Appraisal Aids - Geographic Images

The Honorable Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Chair
Ways and Means Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 130
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Wilkins, Vice-Chair Feldmark, and Esteemed Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

House Bill 176 aims to modernize, enhance, and standardize the property assessment process. **The bill is a reintroduction that passed the House two years in a row**, enabling the State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) to use Geographic Information System (GIS) visualizations overlaid on oblique areal photography to assist its assessments statewide. The bill modernizes and standardizes the Department's menu of tools it uses to conduct property assessments.

Improved Accuracy and Efficiency in Assessments Leads to Increased Revenues: Integrating GIS data and oblique areal photographic imagery into SDAT's assessment practices is a simple step to modernize, standardize, and streamline Maryland's property assessment processes. Currently, SDAT assessors must physically go to properties and conduct assessments when they have questions about changes to a given property that could impact values. The upgrade leverages common technology already utilized by nine counties in Maryland¹ to increase SDAT's effectiveness and accuracy statewide.

Cost Sharing is Worth the Investment for Counties: The bill requires Counties and the City of Baltimore to collectively reimburse the State for costs up to \$1 million annually and requires a 50% split between the jurisdictions and the State for any costs over the first million annually. In turn, the total statewide assessable real property base would increase by up to \$1.25 billion—leading to \$1.4 million in increased revenues for the State and \$15 million to local jurisdictions annually.

Addressing Staffing and Resource Challenges with Technological Improvements: Like many state agencies, SDAT faces challenges in maintaining the large staff size necessary to carry out its mandate to conduct assessments of more than two million properties statewide once every three years. HB 176 shrinks the time and physical labor required for assessments while increasing accuracy and reducing errors, bringing in more revenue and allowing SDAT's assessors to focus on more complex valuation tasks.

Greater Privacy: HB 176 would enable the use of common technology to assess properties accurately and quickly. This contrasts with the current impracticable physical assessment process that requires SDAT personnel to visit individual properties to complete assessments. This assessment process reduces physical intrusions and minimizes the need for assessors to physically enter private property. Oblique aerial photography is a specific, technical term, and technicians can only capture images at certain angles which must be used only for assessment purposes. These images are taken from too far away and at too severe an angle to capture any detail inside buildings, ensuring that the privacy of Maryland citizens is protected.

¹ Frederick, Harford, Montgomery, Howard, Prince George's, Calvert, Wicomico, Anne Arundel, and Baltimore City

Figure 1- example from a vendor, EagleView: <https://www.eagleview.com/>



Building on Existing Success: Many counties in Maryland already use oblique aerial photography to conduct property assessments with great success. The major change this legislation brings is that the State will partner directly with all jurisdictions to implement oblique aerial photography bringing greater coordination and consistency.

House Bill 176 modernizes our property assessment processes, making it consistent across jurisdictions, giving our assessors the tools they need to perform their duties more effectively, minimizing physical intrusions onto private properties, and allowing local jurisdictions and the State to increase revenues while addressing the Department's operational challenges and staffing issues.

For these reasons, I urge your support for House Bill 176 and respectfully request a favorable report for the third year in a row.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kris Fair".

Delegate Kris Fair
District 3, Frederick County