



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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The Honorable Jheanelle Wilkins, Chair
Ways and Means Committee
Taylor House Office Building, Room 131
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of House Bill 1279: DHCD – Catalytic Revitalization Project Tax Credit - Alterations**

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Committee:

I want to express my appreciation to Delegate Ruff for his leadership on House Bill 1279 – Catalytic Revitalization Project Tax Credit – Alterations (HB1279). This legislation would authorize a tax credit for the revitalization of properties owned by the federal or state government. The bill would incentivize the redevelopment of those properties to create affordable workforce housing, particularly in designated transit-oriented areas.

This bill would complement Howard County's recently adopted legislation (CB18-2025) that promotes affordable housing in transit-oriented zoning districts. This legislation requires developers to designate at least 20% of the units to be affordable to moderate income households earning up to 80% of the Howard County median income, with an additional requirement to provide 5% of the units to be affordable to very low-income households earning up to 20% of the County's median income.

In Howard County, we have expanded affordable housing using creative financing strategies, targeted tax relief and collaboration with the nonprofit development community.

In 2019, Enterprise Community Development initiated a plan to redevelop five aging and obsolete rental properties under their ownership in Columbia. After receiving approval from the Zoning Board, Enterprise began advancing plans to redevelop these affordable housing communities into modern, mixed-income communities. We championed these projects and partnership with Enterprise through payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) agreements to help finance redevelopment. Furthermore, the County has invested more than \$17 million in the Enterprise redevelopment plan, including more than \$4 million from the Housing Opportunities Trust Fund. When the redevelopment plan is complete, Enterprise is expected to deliver approximately 600 modern, mixed-income homes in Howard County that welcome families at a variety of price points. In 2024, Howard County cut the ribbon on the first of these community projects, Legacy at Twin Rivers. This new development, with workforce housing, welcomes more than 150 families to live in a walkable, amenity-rich community near Downtown Columbia. In 2025, Howard County joined Enterprise to break ground on their next two redevelopment projects, the Legacy at Cedar Lane and the Vision at Parkway, which will result in 205 new homes for the local workforce.

In October 2023, we launched our Housing Opportunities are Meant for Everyone initiative, known as HOME. Comprised of a suite of policy and programmatic initiatives, HOME is aimed at tackling housing affordability in Howard County. HOME proposals included an expansion of Howard County's Right to Purchase law, state legislation to expand financing options for the creation of new affordable housing



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units, new rental assistance programs for students and families experiencing homelessness, and home accessibility modifications for seniors and people with disabilities.

As part of the new Performing Arts Center in Downtown Columbia, the Howard County Housing Commission is constructing a mixed-income housing community called Artists Flats. This project, which is supported by more than \$3 million in County investment, will bring 174 new residential units to Downtown Columbia across several mixed-income price points. The mixed-income housing will be constructed on top of the Performing Arts Center. Funding for this housing project was supported in part by the nonprofit Columbia Downtown Housing Corporation, which works to provide a full-spectrum and diverse mix of housing, ensuring that low-, moderate- and middle-income families have an opportunity to live in Downtown Columbia. The realization of this important progress will help meet a critical need for workforce housing in Howard County.

My administration has been a strong supporter of Patuxent Commons, a 76-unit mixed-income community that is focused on housing people with disabilities, older adults, and families. Importantly, 25% of units will be set aside for people with disabilities, making this inclusive project the first of its kind in Howard County. The project was developed by the nonprofit Mission First Housing Group in partnership with the Howard County Housing Commission and the Autism Society of Maryland. The County invested more than \$6 million to advance this project and partnered with the Patuxent Commons team on financing solutions. Completed in 2025, this project serves as a model for other inclusive housing projects throughout the United States.

Additionally, in 2022, we created Howard County's first Housing Opportunities Trust Fund (HOTF). A key recommendation of the Housing Opportunities Master Plan, the HOTF is a critical funding tool that allows investment in affordable housing opportunities, homeownership programs, unit preservation, and homeless services. My administration has invested \$15 million into the Trust Fund, which have supported new affordable housing projects, promoted affordable homeownership, provided rental assistance to seniors, and more. Key investments from the Trust Fund include gap financing to affordable housing projects, as well as funding to support foreclosure prevention, senior rental assistance, and homeownership opportunities.

Howard County's 5-year HUD Consolidated Plan identifies county-owned parcels that can be redeveloped as affordable and workforce housing communities. The shortage of housing units in the County leads to higher rents and sale prices that are not affordable for the County's workforce, particularly low- and moderate-income households.

Providing tax credits to develop housing units in transit-oriented areas will help the county and the state create more affordable units and support the state's workforce. I urge the Committee's **favorable report on HB1279**.

Respectfully,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive