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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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Testimony in support of HB1253 - National Capital Strategic Economic Development Program - Eligibility

HB1253 is a simple bill that is needed to fully utilize the National Capital Strategic Economic Development Program (NED). This is essentially corrective legislation from a bill we passed to establish this program back in 2019 (HB1266). There were several amendments to that bill which unintentionally made it prohibitive to actually invest in the program. To correct this, we followed Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) guidelines to explicitly include sustainable communities. With this new language, it will be far easier to contribute to projects inside the Beltway.

The NED program includes a \$7 million annual appropriation to support various community enhancement programs, such as:

- Down payment assistance to rehabilitate homes,
- Acquisition of vacant properties,
- Energy efficiency programs,
- Mixed-use projects,
- Enhancement of open space workforce development programs,
- Strategic demolition, and
- Development of affordable housing.

This bill revises the language to make sure that the funding is only used in sustainable communities that are completely or partially inside the beltway, where it is needed most. Passage of this bill will help ensure that the National Capital Region is able to maintain its economic competitiveness, reduce its housing gap, and provide affordable, healthy housing opportunities to all residents.

For these reasons, I ask for a favorable report on HB1253.