



January 26, 2021

House Bill 90 - State and Local Housing Programs – Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing

Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: Support with Amendments

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 90, a bill that would require two major actions to plan for and create more fair and equitable housing opportunities throughout the State. Arundel Community Development Services, Inc. (ACDS) serves as Anne Arundel County’s administrator of federal housing and community development funds and as such, is responsible for leading its fair housing planning efforts.

The bill would require the State of Maryland and each jurisdiction to create an Assessment of Fair Housing, or “AFH,” that would include, in part, an assessment of segregation and disparate housing opportunities for protected classes, fair housing issues and strategies to address those issues. As proposed, the AFH would need to be included in the housing element of each local jurisdiction’s comprehensive land use plan. Anne Arundel County and ACDS are supportive of this requirement, and in fact, together with the Baltimore Metropolitan Council and our partners in the Baltimore area, recently led and developed such an assessment for the region. Although HUD requires some fair housing planning, the Baltimore area jurisdictions voluntarily completed the more extensive assessment. This helps us better identify and develop strategies to address patterns of segregation and disinvestment and promote affordable housing opportunities so that low income households and protected classes would have better access to jobs, transportation and quality schools. As a result, local strategies identified in the plan have been incorporated into the County’s Five Year Housing and Community Development Plan and the most recent draft General Development Plan’s housing element. **While we support this concept, we also support an amendment clarifying that the AFH should be “incorporated by reference” into local land use plans.**

The bill would also require the State and local jurisdictions to submit an annual report to the Governor touching upon the number of affordable housing units available by type, as well as the racial composition of the Census tracts where they are located, efforts to promote fair housing, and efforts to deconcentrate affordable housing and increase the availability of affordable units in areas of opportunity. We feel the requested data is important in conducting a reliable analysis of fair housing. At the same time, **we support amendments offered by the Baltimore Regional Fair Housing Group that would require this data once every five years and in a manner that aligns with our HUD required planning requirements.**

For the reasons noted above, we urge a Favorable report, with amendments.

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