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January 22, 2021

Committee Chair Kumar P. Barve  
Committee Vice-Chair Dana M. Stein  
Environment & Transportation Committee  
House Office Building, Room 251  
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: Support for House Bill 90, State and Local Housing Programs – Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing**

**Position: Favorable**

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Baltimore Regional Partnership (BRHP) to express our support for House Bill 90 to establish a statewide Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule and analysis requirement. We urge the committee to file a favorable report and recommend the amendments discussed at the end of this testimony.

BRHP is a nonprofit organization that operates the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program for thousands of families throughout the Baltimore region. Our mission is to expand housing choices for families with low incomes who have historically been excluded from housing in well-resourced neighborhoods, helping them to access and transition successfully to safe, healthy, and economically vibrant communities. We do this by providing rental assistance in the form of the Housing Choice Voucher and coupling that with counseling supports for our families as they move from areas of concentrated poverty to areas of opportunity in Baltimore City and the five surrounding counties.

Our organization is a testament to the need for communities in Maryland to conduct data-driven analyses of discrimination and segregation in their jurisdictions. Our work in housing mobility began as a result of the landmark housing desegregation lawsuit *Thompson v. HUD*. In this 1995 lawsuit, the court ruled that HUD had violated fair housing law by failing to consider the history and presence of racial housing segregation in the city, reverse that segregation, and mitigate the harm caused by it. Since *Thompson*, the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program has assisted over 5,000 families in their move from racially segregated areas of concentrated poverty to areas of opportunity where these families enjoy increased access to quality schools, job opportunities, and safety.



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Housing agencies and affordable housing developers demonstrate a propensity for maintaining housing segregation either passively or, in the worst cases, actively. In any case, the consequence is geographic concentration of poverty, depriving many families of the power to decide where to live. A required fair housing analysis would help to highlight opportunities that would disrupt these patterns.

Given the need for this type of analysis and its demonstrated impact, BRHP supports HB-0090. To enhance the positive impact of this bill, we are suggesting the following amendments for your consideration:

- All information provided by the Department's annual report should include jurisdictional disaggregation in order to understand how affordable and fair housing varies across the state.
- In addition to the requirement listed for housing authorities and political subdivisions, reporting on affirmative marketing efforts to support people of color in gaining access to assisted housing in higher opportunity areas and the outcomes of these efforts should also be required of LIHTC and bond-financing awardees.
- Ensure that communities with need for *comprehensive* revitalization efforts, as well as communities already engaged in such efforts, continue to receive investment from the Department and any covered entities, and are not excluded from such investment due to AFFH analysis.

We believe that HB-0090, with these suggested amendments, will lead to improved fair housing and a greater quality of life for Marylanders and encourage the committee to file a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adria Crutchfield".

Adria Crutchfield  
Executive Director  
Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership