



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB 859

March 2, 2021

TO: Members of the Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations

RE: SENATE BILL 859 - Department of Housing and Community Development – Appraisal Gap from Historic Redlining Financial Assistance Program – Establishment

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports with amendment** Senate Bill (SB) 859.

This legislation along with its companion House Bill 1239 would establish financial assistance that would cover the gap between what it costs to build or redevelop a home and what it can be sold for. This appraisal gap is one of the most critical obstacles to homeownership in the City and is most prevalent in communities that have been historically redlined and disinvested. It is an established fact that homeownership is one of the effective paths to creating intergenerational wealth, and providing funding to cover the gap between construction costs and what the market will bear will make owning a home a reality for hundreds of city families.

Baltimore is fortunate that developers working in its historically disinvested communities would meet the legislative requirement of being located both in a low-income census tract and as a State Sustainable Community. Many of these developers are themselves small, minority-owned start up businesses who, because they are undertaking their initial projects, lack the track record necessary to access other sources of funding. Through its Community Catalyst Grants program, the City's Department of Housing and Community Development has begun to address the lack of capital and appraisal gap but is limited in the support that can be provided. A State Appraisal Gap program would leverage City and other resources, significantly increasing the number of vacant and under-utilized properties that can increase the City's tax base.

Amendments

The City would like to offer two amendments. SB859 would permit completed projects to be sold to households earning up to 140 percent of the Area Median Income and does not place limits on the maximum amount of funds that can be provided to support a project. The BCA proposes:

- (1) limiting sales to households earning a maximum of 80 percent of the Area Median Income, and
- (2) limiting the maximum amount of funds to 35 percent of the Appraisal Gap or 80 percent of the National Median Sales price.

Baltimore City supports both of these conditions first, to maximize and leverage the amount of funds that can be used to support homeowners, and second because families earning 80 percent or less of the Area Median Income are the most excluded from becoming homeowners due in large part to the Appraisal Gap.

We respectfully request a **favorable with amendment** report on Senate Bill 859.