

MARY L. WASHINGTON, PH.D
Legislative District 43
Baltimore City

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair
Joint Committee on Ending
Homelessness

Chair
Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families



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SUPPORT – SB 871

Accessory Dwelling Unit Authorization and Promotion Act

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
March 3, 2022

Testimony of Senator Mary Washington

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

I respectfully urge you to vote favorable on Senate Bill 871, which creates a set of standards for jurisdictions to authorize and promote Accessory Dwelling Units throughout our state and create a reporting mechanism to help quantify our collective successes and lessons learned in creating these new homes to address our critical housing shortage.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are typically small home conversions or additions to existing homes that include a private entrance, a kitchen, bedroom, and bath. They are most often basement or garage conversions. Some ADUs are a home addition or a detached unit in the backyard. ADUs have a long history in our state and country as they were commonplace in all communities until the 1950s.

This bill is a result of the demands from homeowners, renters, senior service providers as well as city and county councils looking for assistance from the state in authorizing and encouraging ADU creation along with a consistent set of minimum standards. Without this authorization, it's a long difficult journey for any city or county - much less a homeowner - to navigate often inconsistent or even non-existent ADU rules. To address those barriers, the AARP has created a set of best practices¹, many of which are incorporated in this bill.

ADUs provide the size, type, and location of housing most in-demand today as Maryland household sizes continue to shrink, but overall housing demand continues to outstrip supply. We are not building enough homes, and we are especially lacking in the smaller unit sizes at prices that people need, want and can afford.

¹ How ADUs expand housing options for people of all ages, AARP Livable Communities publications, 2019
<https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2019/accessory-dwelling-units-adus.html>

SB 871 has two parts: First, it provides minimum standards and guidelines. Second, it creates a data gathering and reporting methodology so we can make future evidence-based decisions.

ADUs are a smart housing solution as they exist where homes and infrastructure are already in place, allowing municipalities to increase their housing supply without spending more money creating new roads, sewers, or power infrastructure.

ADUs allow everyday homeowners to gain much-needed rental income from providing housing, while reducing the pressure on the government or developers to create new housing.

Income from an ADU can also help a homeowner qualify to buy or keep a home and an ADU may add over 40% to a property's value².

ADUs are smaller, more sustainable homes, reducing the impact on our local utilities, our environment, and our climate.

ADUs increase the odds of living near your work, school, and necessary services, while reducing commutes, as they co-exist within the 74% of residential land in Maryland otherwise zoned exclusively single-family.

ADUs provide workforce and caretaker housing. They can serve as a starter home for our younger adults, a home office, or a private space for guests.

Seniors can more affordably age in place close to the people they love and in the communities they know by remaining in their homes, with their caregivers living in the ADU (or vice-versa).

SB 871 will benefit both homeowners and renters in Maryland. While this bill will help ease our housing pressures, the impact won't overburden communities as ADUs typically comprise just one or two units per 100 homeowners.

By authorizing and promoting the creation of smaller living spaces that tend to be more affordable, nearer work, and school while benefiting both renters and homeowners alike, we have an extraordinary opportunity in encouraging homeowners to help us address our severe housing shortage.

I welcome your partnership in this important effort and urge you to vote favorable on SB 871.

In Partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary Washington".

Senator Mary Washington
Maryland 43rd District

² Thomaz, S. (2018). Investigating ADUs: Determinants of location and effects on property values. University of California, Irvine. https://www.economics.uci.edu/files/docs/workingpapers/JobMarketPaper_Thomaz.pdf