



Senate Bill 818 – Permit Applications- Environmental Justice Screening

Position: Unfavorable

Maryland REALTORS® supports balancing the needs of the communities impacted unequally by environmental impacts alongside the growing challenge of affordable housing. We are concerned that SB 818 can be used to slow needed housing construction by delaying the permit process and making the construction of affordable housing more expensive and more difficult.

Maryland EJ Screen would take four categories and weight them equally in a final EJ Score, inclusive of sensitive populations; pollution burden exposure; environmental effects and socioeconomic factors. This screening is similar to the Environmental Protection Agency's EJ Screening, which uses a "demographic" category rather than "socioeconomic" category under SB 818. While the EPA "demographic" factors include items like race, age, income, and unemployment rate, it does not include residential housing, blight or housing vacancies. The Maryland REALTORS® recommends that residential housing be a component of the socio-economic considerations, which would help affordable housing providers applying for state permits in communities with a dire need for safe and affordable housing.

Maryland is currently estimated to have a housing undersupply of over 80,000 units which includes both for sale and residential rental property. Moreover, according to the "Maryland Housing Needs Assessment and 10-Year Strategic Plan (Needs Assessment)," Maryland will be adding 178,000 new households between 2020 and 2030. As permitting for MDE focuses typically on development, sewage, wastewater treatment centers, septic systems, there could be an impact on implementation on these much-needed services for Maryland citizens if housing isn't considered a component of the analysis.

For more information, contact

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