



Senate Bill 296 – Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

Position: Support with Amendment

Maryland REALTORS® offers its support for Senate Bill 296, which establishes the Whole-Home Repair fund to increase housing conditions for lower-income Maryland residents.

REALTORS® greatly appreciate the inclusion of small rental housing providers in this program. Many of the rental housing registration and inspection programs which have been established and the county and municipal levels are due to code compliance concerns. When those programs are enacted, there is always a concern about how independent landlords, who do not have access to the capital as larger property management companies, will be able to afford or finance any necessary repairs to their rental units.

This bill provides both loan and grant options for those landlords to raise the level of habitability in their units. However, our members have expressed some concern on the ability of independent landlords to meet the requirements currently outlined for loan forgiveness. Those include a 15-year lookback period on both annual rent increases and timeframes for past violation corrections.

REALTORS® would encourage as much flexibility be given to landlords to have their loans forgiven under this program, especially since it is ultimately their tenants who benefit from the improvements made to their units. Most of our landlords indicate that they would be able to meet a 5-year evaluation of rental rates, as detailed rent logs are often not kept beyond that time. At a minimum, state and local agencies should closely review the annual reports on the number of landlords who had their loans forgiven and adjust program parameters if necessary.

With consideration for the outlined limitations on loan forgiveness for small landlords, Maryland REALTORS® asks for your support of Senate Bill 296.

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