

JUSTIN READY
Legislative District 5
Carroll County

MINORITY WHIP
Finance Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Senator Justin Ready

SB 529 – Carroll County – Sober Living Houses - Authorization

Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier and members of the Finance Committee:

As amended, Senate Bill 529 would allow Carroll County to put a sober living element into the county comprehensive master plan to give guidance on how many can be in a certain area. It would give our county flexibility in ensuring an orderly, safe, and fair distribution of these kinds of group homes. The amendment changes the authorization language to not mandatory.

The density of location of these types of facilities was the main concern brought to me and the entire Carroll delegation's attention by the people of the Fairfield neighborhood community in Westminster. An aggressive property management firm based out of Pennsylvania began purchasing homes and then contracting with a Maryland-based recovery center, incorporated only in 2021 to establish Drug/Substance Abuse Recovery Center Group Homes in this neighborhood. Working in tandem, these two entities purchased three (3) properties from September 2021 to August 2022 and converted them from single-family dwellings to corporate-owned Sober Living/Substance Abuse Recovery Center Group Homes in this neighborhood. This was done without the neighborhood's knowledge or any notice while adding to one other previously established group home set up as a Female Sober Living Recovery residence, which has had several problems in the past eight years. What has followed is continual disruptions all hours of the day and night and no real accountability from the owners.

According to the testimony of multiple residents, it is not unusual to hear an ambulance at any time of day, foot and car traffic has increased dramatically, cars broken into, an increase in water/sewer/trash usage- increasing overall concerns for the safety and wellbeing of homes, property, and children.

Let me be clear before proceeding - the community members – the people that I've spoken with - are not opposed to having a sober living home in their community but having four in one small neighborhood - which seems to have been targeted because they do not have a Homeowner's Association - is too much.

This is a non-conforming type of use for a home in this neighborhood and residents were never provided notice of such use. Unfortunately, current state law does not allow any regulation of the placement of group homes. This bill is simply trying to allow our county the ability to have some regulation on the number of group homes in a particular area and some control over the process. Hand- shake leases between a property management company and a provider of health services do not provide the kind of oversight needed for any county planning and zoning board. Current law does not even provide for any kind of public or community notification requirements.

SB 529 simply asks for flexibility to allow our county to have some ability to organize and control the density and location of these needed services. The Carroll Senate and House Delegation voted unanimously in favor of SB 529, a letter of support and voting sheet are also included.

I respectfully request a **favorable** vote on Senate Bill 529.