



Bringing people together to build homes, communities & hope

SENATE BILL 953
Housing – Community Development Fund Program Act - Funding
BUDGET & TAX COMMITTEE
February 28, 2024

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Senate:

Habitat Chesapeake urges this committee to vote a favorable report for **SB 953 – Housing – Community Development Fund Program Act - Funding**

SB 953 creates a permanent funding source for the Community Development Fund which was created in 2018. The funding is critical operating dollars for community-based organizations to use for affordable housing, neighborhood and commercial revitalization, housing and financial counseling, small business development, community services, and more.

We are seeking \$5 million from the Unclaimed Property Fund after usual disbursements have been made.

For 42 years, Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake has been a catalyst for moving low-income families toward more prosperous, stable futures through affordable homeownership. By bringing people together to build homes, communities, and inspire hope, we settled 798 families into energy-efficient, affordable homes with zero-interest mortgages. This positively impacted the lives of more than 3,000 partner family members (more than half of whom are children), involved more than 5,000 volunteers annually and impacted hundreds of other community residents who benefit from safer, more vital communities as homeownership rates increase.

Our key services include:

- Home construction and Rehabilitation
- Homeowner Services
- HabiCorps, Workforce Development
- Financial Literacy
- Credit Remediation
- Volunteer Engagement
- Community Engagement and Revitalization
- ReStore, a Social Enterprise



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This year, we are working on 16 homes, both new construction and rehabilitation of properties that stand vacant or abandoned in Baltimore area neighborhoods including Milton-Montford, Woodbourne-McCabe, Sandtown, and Curtis Bay. How do we accomplish this work? With devoted and compassionate employees, strong community partnerships, committed funding partners, trusted partner families, and a network of six ReStores.

With chronic underinvestment in nonprofit infrastructure and staff, we are strained for capacity, forced to stretch dollars, or decrease the pace of our work, thereby limiting our impact. Sources for operating funds, as well as unrestricted support, are traditionally difficult for the nonprofit sector to access and are critical to the success of the planning and completion of capital projects, particularly those that support homeownership as a generational wealth building tool for low-income families in underinvested communities.

Habitat Chesapeake is grateful for the funding sources that we are able to access for operating, but we are also abundantly aware of the limited number of sources, and the fact that more organizations with increasing need will compete for the same pool of funds in our region.

Please vote a favorable report for SB 953.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leila Kohler-Fruel".

Leila Kohler-Fruel