



TESTIMONY FOR SB0906
Housing and Community Development - Conversion of Commercial Buildings for Residential Use - Report

Bill Sponsor: Senator Augustine

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: **FAVORABLE**

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0906 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

MLC believes housing is a basic human right. However, Maryland is facing a significant affordable housing crisis. We also have a surplus of vacant commercial space. SB0906 offers a solution to these problems by requiring each county and Baltimore City to inventory vacant commercial buildings, develop a plan to convert vacant commercial buildings for residential use, and submit a report to the Department of Housing and Community Development on an ongoing basis.

SB0906 can lead to the possible creation of affordable housing. Affordable housing not only helps meet a basic human need but has other positive impacts. These benefits include fewer unhoused, fewer evictions, reduced poverty levels, and improved education of the children living in these developments.

Conversion of vacant commercial space can also revitalize an urban area, increase the tax base, reduce urban sprawl, create walkable neighborhoods from mixed-use developments, and utilize existing structures efficiently. Converting commercial buildings to residential use contributes to sustainable development, community well-being, and efficient land utilization.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.