



Oral Testimony on behalf of the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce

*Oral Testimony In Support of
SB 484—Land Use - Affordable Housing - Zoning Density and Permitting
(Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024)
March 1, 2024*

The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce (GBCC) was founded in 1926. Since then, the organization has grown to more than 570 businesses located throughout the Greater Bethesda area and beyond. On behalf of these members, we appreciate the opportunity to provide oral testimony in support of Senate Bill 484— Land Use - Affordable Housing - Zoning Density and Permitting

“Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Madame Vice Chair and members of the Committee, I’m Ellen Coren, President & CEO of Chesapeake Public Strategies, here today on behalf of the approximately 600 members of the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce to testify in support of Senate Bill 484.

For many of us, the housing shortage is not something we experience personally. But for many Marylanders, the housing crisis means making the painful decisions of whether to pay for the roof over their heads or go without essentials like food or medicine for their families.

Our Chamber has made increasing our attainable housing supply one of our highest public policy priorities. We strongly support approaches that include expedited approvals, fee reductions, property tax credits/abatements and use of public land for mixed income housing.

We commend the Moore Administration for their focus on this issue, which also has the added benefit of bringing in more talented workers to boost our economy.

We appreciate the concerns some have expressed about the APFO language in the bill. However, we must be willing to make adjustments that will increase our housing supply.

For the relatively limited number of qualified projects under this legislation, this APFO language will have a negligible impact on current infrastructure. And we've seen situations where using the APFO to unreasonably limit residential construction has had negative consequences.

For example, Montgomery County imposed a building moratorium that halted new residential construction in areas where schools were over 120% of capacity. Policy-makers finally realized that existing homes, not new construction, have by far the greatest impact on school capacity. So, the County needlessly lost revenue from impact fees, development fees, income and property taxes. But worse, the moratorium exacerbated the housing supply shortage.

Sometimes a friendly nudge is a good thing and making it easier to build attainable housing is a great thing.

For those reasons the Greater Bethesda Chamber respectfully asks that you vote favorably on Senate Bill 424. Thank you."