



September 9, 2025

Baltimore County Council
400 Washington Avenue
Towson, MD 21204

RE: Joint Organizational Opposition to Baltimore County Bill 54-25

Dear Chair, Ertel and Honorable Members of the Baltimore County Council:

We, the undersigned organizations committed to housing equity and community development, write to express our opposition to Bill 54-25, which would allow individual councilmembers to unilaterally rescind zoning changes made during the Comprehensive Zoning Map Process by simply affirming that the change was a mistake.

This bill undermines the integrity of Baltimore County's zoning process by concentrating zoning authority in the hands of individual councilmembers, reinforcing the practice of councilmanic privilege and weakening countywide planning efforts to create housing that families can afford.

Baltimore County is in the midst of a housing affordability crisis. According to the latest [Maryland Housing Needs Assessment \(2025\)](#):

- Half of renter households in the county are **cost burdened**, spending more than 30% of their income on housing.
- The county has a severe shortage of housing for low-income renters—**lacking 749 homes per 1,000 households** for renters earning 0–30% of Area

Median Income (AMI), and **506 homes per 1,000 households** for those earning 30–50% of AMI.

Zoning regulations have been identified by the [county itself](#) as a **barrier to affordable housing**, limiting density and restricting multifamily development in many areas. These shortages disproportionately impact Black, Hispanic, disabled, and senior residents, who face higher rates of housing cost burden and fewer accessible or age-appropriate housing options.

Bill 54-25 would make it even harder to build the affordable housing our communities need. Statutorily concentrating any zoning decision-making power with one councilmember invites political interference, reduces transparency, and undermines the county's obligations under the Voluntary Compliance Agreement to expand housing access equitably and to redress historic discrimination. It also discourages developers and housing advocates from pursuing projects in districts where zoning decisions can be reversed arbitrarily.

We urge the Council to reject Bill 54-25 and any legislation that reinforces councilmanic privilege over land use decisions and focus efforts on amending zoning laws to allow for greater density, mixed-use development, accessibility and affordable housing construction across all communities.

Baltimore County has the opportunity to lead with equity, sustainability, and vision. We call on you to remove rather than create additional barriers that prevent families from finding safe, accessible, affordable homes and to build a future where all residents can thrive.

Sincerely,

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