

MARYLAND AFFORDABLE HOUSING COALITION

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

APRIL 28, 2009

The Maryland General Assembly session ended on April 23, 2009. During the session, MAHC was represented by Barbara Hoffman and The Artemis Group. Attached is a copy of a report prepared by The Artemis Group summarizing our activities during the session and other matters of interest to our membership.

The 2009 MAHC Legislative Committee included Linda Couch (National Low Income Housing Coalition), Mark Dambly (Pennrose Properties), Rob Goldman (Montgomery Housing Partnership), Alan Goldstein (AHC, Inc.), Roscoe Johnson (Druid Heights CDC), Trudy McFall (Homes for America), Tedi Osias (Housing Opportunities Commission), Dave Raderman (Gallagher Evelius & Jones), Corine Sheridan (Boston Capital), John Spencer (Victory Housing), and Jeff Stern (Riverside Advisors). The Committee had monthly meetings prior to the session and bi-weekly meetings or conference calls during the session to plan our strategy, implement our priorities and monitor issues of importance to our membership. I want to thank all members of the Committee for their hard work on behalf of the Coalition. We also welcome any other Coalition members to join the Committee next year.

Originally, our top priority for 2009 was the creation of a new Housing Trust Fund. In 2007 and 2008, we worked with coalition partners and legislative sponsors to craft a bill, and over the past summer we were successful in reaching agreement with DHCD on their concerns with the bill so that we had a framework that would allow the Fund to proceed this year provided there was a reasonable probability of getting substantial funding. Unfortunately, the economic environment precluded such funding this year, so all parties agreed that the right approach was to table the idea until the climate was more favorable.

Our focus then shifted to increasing the funding for DHCD's Rental Housing Funds. Our strategy was to push hard for an increase, realizing that an increase was unlikely and hoping that that pressure would help support at least level funding and no cuts. Through meetings with the administration and legislators, an extensive grass roots letter and e-mail campaign, Housing Day and other initiatives, we helped convey the importance of these programs. Ultimately, the Rental Housing Funds were level-funded with the prior year, and there was no supplantation of the funding as a result of the new federal stimulus money.

With respect to goal of supporting DHCD's Rental Housing Funds, the results should be viewed as an accomplishment in a very difficult time. We made our points effectively, and we know that our industry's voice was heard. The Committee encourages all members to write the Governor thanking him for his support demonstrated by level

funding of the Rental Housing Funds and non-supplantation with respect to the federal funds. It is important that we not only push for what we want, but that we also take the time to thank the Governor for the support that our industry does get.

The Legislative Committee also represented MAHC in efforts at the federal level to address the crisis in the low income housing tax credit program. MAHC on its own, and in coalition with other national organizations, supported and encouraged legislative support for initiatives that were included in the Housing and Economic Recovery Act and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to help the affordable rental housing industry. MAHC will continue to support efforts to identify and promote ideas that will help stabilize and reinvigorate the tax credit program.

The top non-budget legislative priority for 2009 was supporting legislation that would allow DHCD's rental housing programs to be used to purchase ownership interests. Although we were able to identify sponsors and drafted a bill, we ended up reaching an understanding with DHCD that their current statutes would allow sponsors to purchase ownership interests as long as all other program requirements were satisfied (with the exception that the rental housing funds could not be used for the acquisition costs themselves).

The balance of the Committee's focus was on supporting bills that were beneficial for our industry and opposing bills that would or might be detrimental to our industry. A major effort was modifying several bills which, as originally proposed, would have the potential unintended consequence of delaying or prohibiting most affordable rental housing projects in the State. Our work resulted in elimination of the problems in those bills. This issue (and many others we were involved in or monitored) is described in more detail in the accompanying summary.

We worked closely with DHCD during the session, and we appreciate DHCD's cooperation and support. While we do not necessarily always agree on specific issues or strategies, we maintain strong communication and mutual respect throughout the year on legislative and policy issues that are important to our industry.

Respectfully, submitted.

Jeffrey Hettleman, Legislative Committee Chair

