

November 2, 2023

The Honorable Brian Schatz
722 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Braun
404 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
2188 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Scott Peters
1201 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Schatz and Braun and Representatives McMorris Rodgers and Peters:

Our organizations write to express strong support for the Build More Housing Near Transit Act of 2023. This bipartisan legislation is vital to maximize federal investment in fixed-guideway transit. The bill will incentivize transit agencies to collaborate with local governments to enact pro-housing policies along proposed transit alignments and station areas. The relatively small change in current evaluation criteria that this bill proposes can positively impact the availability of housing for all people in transit-served locations across the country. We applaud you for your continued – and bipartisan - leadership on this issue and encourage you to work with your colleagues to ensure its passage.

The United States is in the middle of a severe housing shortage and affordability crisis exacerbated by the economic toll of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Up for Growth’s research, from 2000 – 2021, the country fell 3.9 million homes short of meeting housing needs. This shortage of homes means families are paying more for rent. Americans are often living further away from jobs and critical services. Younger people are becoming homeowners at historically low rates, homelessness is on the rise, and the country is not living up to its full economic potential. Approximately half of the United States’ renter households are cost-burdened, spending more than thirty percent of their income on housing costs.

The Build More Housing Near Transit Act would take steps to solve these challenges by spurring the much-needed housing development near transit locations and fulfilling critical transit, housing, economic development, and environmental goals. It would achieve this by making some minor but essential enhancements to the evaluation criteria for the FTA’s Fixed Guideway Capital Investment Grants Program, or Section 5309 grants. While real estate and economic development potential is currently part of the evaluation, each factor is considered individually rather than holistically. As a result, projects can receive funding when the potential for affordable and market-rate housing development is nearly impossible, while projects ripe for affordable housing development are denied funding.

For example, a city applying for transit dollars could have exorbitant impact fees or restrictive land-use policies that effectively prevent housing from being built in the vicinity of a transit station. Yet, these policies alone would not disqualify a project applicant from receiving funding. As a result, the Section 5309 Grant Program’s adjacent goals of enabling “transit-supportive land use” and “economic development” often go unrealized.

If this bill becomes law, the Build More Housing Near Transit Act would incentivize project sponsors to collaborate with zoning authorities to enact pro-housing policies, policies aimed at increasing the supply of market rate and affordable housing. These are efforts already underway by some transit agencies, and would not be a significant added expense or requirement to collaborate with zoning jurisdictions to secure local land-use policies and programs proven to increase housing production near transit. Applicants who

submit documented evidence of pro-housing policies will receive a full one-point bonus on their overall score.

Introduced in the 117th Congress as H.R. 2483, the Build More Housing Near Transit Act was included as a provision in H.R. 3684, the *Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation (INVEST) in America Act*, which passed the House of Representatives in July 2021. In the Senate, we believe the *Build More Housing Near Transit Act* can and should receive immediate consideration. It is a smart, bipartisan, and low-cost solution needed to improve America's infrastructure and Americans' quality of life.

From encouraging more thoughtful planning, to supporting more inclusive housing policies, to enabling more efficient use of federal dollars, the Build More Housing Near Transit Act is a sound policy and the product of a collaborative process. Its passage will enable housing that uses less land, take cars off the road, and allow people to live closer to opportunity. Thank you again for your diligence on this critical legislation, and we look forward to working with you to pass it.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

American Planning Association
Grounded Solutions Network
Habitat for Humanity International
Leading Builders of America
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
NAIOP, the Commercial Real Estate Development Association
National Apartment Association
National Association of REALTORS®
National Association of Residential Property Managers
National Housing Conference
National Leased Housing Association
National Multifamily Housing Council
National NeighborWorks Association
Prosperity Now
Up for Growth Action
YIMBY Action
YIMBY Jewish
YIMBY Latinx

State and Local Organizations

10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania)
Abundant Housing Atlanta (Georgia)
Asheville for All (North Carolina)
Atlanta Apartment Association (Georgia)
Bend YIMBY (Oregon)
Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers (New Jersey)
Central Texas Congress for the New Urbanism (Texas)
Circulate San Diego (California)
CUrbanism Club (Illinois)
Dallas Neighbors for Housing (Texas)
DC YIMBYs (District of Columbia)
East Bay YIMBY (California)

Evolve Tri-Valley (California)
Gainesville is for People (Florida)
Georgia Apartment Association (Georgia)
Grow The Richmond (California)
Habitat for Humanity of Oregon (Oregon)
Hawai'i YIMBY (Hawai'i)
Housing Development Consortium (Washington)
Housing Now Nashville (Tennessee)
Lancaster Lebanon Habitat for Humanity (Pennsylvania)
Live TC (Michigan)
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce (California)
Madison is for People (Wisconsin)
Maine Affordable Housing Coalition (Maine)
Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties (Washington)
More Homes Miami (Florida)
Mountain View YIMBY (California)
NAIOP Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania)
Napa-Solano for Everyone (California)
NEOurbanism (Ohio)
New York State Association for Affordable Housing (New York)
Northern Neighbors (California)
Northern Virginia Association for Affordable Housing (Virginia)
Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance (Virginia)
Open New York (New York)
Oregon Smart Growth (Oregon)
Orlando YIMBY (Florida)
Palmetto YIMBY (South Carolina)
Pathways to Housing PA (Pennsylvania)
Peninsula for Everyone (California)
Progress Noe Valley (California)
Pro-Housing Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania)
Real Estate Council of Austin (Texas)
Regional Plan Association (New York)
RVA YIMBY (Virginia)
San Francisco YIMBY (California)
Santa Cruz YIMBY (California)
Santa Rosa YIMBY (California)
Seattle YIMBY (Washington)
SLOCo YIMBY (California)
Sound Communities (Washington)
South Bay YIMBY (California)
Southside Forward (California)
Southwest Fair Housing Council (Arizona)
Spokane Housing for All (Washington)
Starved Rock Country Community Foundation (Illinois)
Streets for People (California)
Tucson for Everyone (Arizona)
Twin Cities YIMBY (Minnesota)
Urban Environmentalists California (California)
Urban Environmentalists Illinois (Illinois)
Utah Clean Energy (Utah)

Ventura County YIMBY (California)
Waco Housing Authority and Affiliates (Texas)
YIMBY Delaware (Delaware)
YIMBY Denver (Colorado)
YIMBY Fort Collins (Colorado)
YIMBY Hampton Roads (Virginia)
YIMBY Louisville (Kentucky)
YIMBY Maryland (Maryland)
YIMBY Oakland County (Michigan)
YIMBY Tampa (Florida)
YIMBYs of NoVA (Virginia)