

**2014 Legislative Initiatives**  
**Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development**

**House Bill 453 - Multifamily Rental Housing Programs Efficiency Act.** The purpose of this proposed legislation is to reduce administrative burdens on program staff, applicants, and local governments by streamlining and consolidating multiple programs under a single program. This legislation consolidates and streamlines language for four programs, the Elderly Rental Housing Program, the Multifamily Rehabilitation Program, the Nonprofit Rehabilitation Program, and the Rental Housing Production Program, by replacing them with one multi-family “Rental Housing Program”. HB 453 does not change local governments own local approval process for development projects. Local governments still review and approve projects in their jurisdiction to ensure compliance local codes and ordinances. Local jurisdictions will still receive a notice from DHCD if a proposed project is located in their City/County and given an opportunity to review and provide comments to DHCD.

**House Bill 553 – Energy-Efficient Homes Construction Loan Program.** The bill establishes the Energy-Efficient Homes Construction Loan Program as a special fund within the Department of Housing and Community Development to provide low-interest loans to home builders for the construction of “low-energy” and “net-zero” homes. A “low-energy home” means a home that due to design, technology and construction products is designed to be at least 60 percent more energy efficient than a home built to applicable building code standards in effect before July 1, 2014. A “net-zero home” means a residence that due to design, technology and construction products is designed to produce as much energy as it uses in a year. The legislation grants DHCD the flexibility to offer preferred rates for loans used to finance net-zero homes or establish different rates based upon the projected success of energy efficiency achieved by the home to be constructed.

**House Bill 451 - Financial Assistance for Food Desert Areas.** There is recognition of the need to attract new and better grocery stores to underserved, low-income communities. Termed “food deserts”, these areas are generally defined as communities that do not have easy access to healthy foods including fresh fruits and vegetables, typically in the form of a supermarket or grocery store. The legislation builds on the recommendations of the Maryland Fresh Food Retail Task Force’s report in December 2012 titled, “Stimulating Supermarket Development in Maryland”. A key recommendation was that Maryland should develop or expand an existing financing program to support the development or expansion of grocery stores or other stores that carry healthy foods in underserved communities (food deserts). This legislation would allow DHCD to expand its Neighborhood Business Works program to provide financial assistance to small businesses located in designated Food Desert Areas for the purposes of providing fresh vegetables, fruits and other healthy foods to local residents. The Secretary, upon the recommendation of an inter-agency food desert advisory committee, would designate Food Desert Areas which must be located within a Priority Funding Area.