


F R O M	Name & Title	Dr. Ihuoma Emenuga, Commissioner of Health	Health Department  AGENCY REPORT	
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202		
	Subject/ Position	23-0468 – Off-Street Parking - Affordable Housing <b>Favorable</b>		

To: President and Members  
of the City Council  
c/o 409 City Hall

April 2, 2024

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to review Council Bill 23-0468, entitled “Off-Street Parking - Affordable Housing.” This ordinance eliminates off-street parking requirements for residential projects that are subject to inclusionary housing requirements (which require developers to set aside a certain percentage of units within a residential project for affordable housing purposes).<sup>i</sup> According to current Baltimore City Code, one parking space is required for every two dwelling units.<sup>ii</sup> Other cities, including Hartford, CT and Austin, TX, have already implemented similar ordinances to reduce or eliminate minimum parking requirements for new housing being built.<sup>iii,iv</sup> Not only will this bill decrease barriers to building new affordable housing stock, it will also promote walkable, active neighborhoods and improve environmental sustainability.

*Public health benefits of Council Bill 23-0468*

First and foremost, Council Bill 23-0468 will decrease barriers to constructing new affordable housing units by eliminating the requirement to provide one parking space for every two dwelling units. Access to affordable, quality, stable housing is a key social determinant of health.<sup>v</sup> Housing impacts physician and mental health in a variety of ways. For example, someone who spends a large proportion of their income on rent may be more likely to need to forego spending money on healthy food or health care.<sup>v</sup> Quality and safety of housing are also important considerations. For example, homes with structural issues and pest infestations can pose serious asthma triggers, which can cause people’s asthma – particularly children’s asthma – to be more severe.<sup>vi</sup> Increased quality, affordable housing stock is good for public health.

Second, by disincentivizing car-centric design, Council Bill 23-0468 may lead to more pedestrian-oriented development, which, in turn would encourage physical activity. When people can easily walk or bike to their destinations, they are more likely to engage in regular exercise.<sup>vii,viii,ix</sup> It is well established that regular exercise is strongly linked to lower rates of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, improved brain health, and even lower risks of certain cancers.<sup>x</sup> This bill may also prove to be good for older adults and people with disabilities, as walkable neighborhoods are often more accessible for people with limited mobility and people who use mobility aids (such as walkers and wheelchairs) than neighborhoods designed around car use. While it may at first seem counterintuitive that walkable design is good for people with disabilities, studies show that improving neighborhood walkability can greatly benefit people with disabilities who would otherwise be limited in their ability and likelihood to travel around their urban environment.<sup>xi,xii</sup>

Council Bill 23-0468 can also improve public health in Baltimore City by indirectly leading to improved air quality. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, the transportation sector contributes the greatest proportion of greenhouse gas emissions compared to other sectors (including industry and agriculture).<sup>xiii</sup> Greenhouse gas emissions contribute to climate change and can negatively impact health.<sup>xiv,xv</sup> Pollution – including vehicle emissions – can lead to increased rates of asthma and cardiovascular disease.<sup>xiv</sup> Limiting parking options could encourage communities to reduce their dependence on cars, subsequently leading to decreased air pollution.<sup>xvi</sup>

For the reasons noted above, BCHD respectfully requests a favorable report on Council Bill 23-0468.

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- <sup>i</sup> [Baltimore City, Maryland, City Code Article 13 Subtitle 2B \(2022\)](#).
- <sup>ii</sup> [Baltimore City, Maryland, City Code, Article 32 § 16-602 \(2021\)](#).
- <sup>iii</sup> [City of Austin, Texas, Resolution No. 20230504-022 \(2023\)](#).
- <sup>iv</sup> [Hartford, Conn., Zoning Regulations, Title 7 § 7.2.1 \(2023\)](#).
- <sup>v</sup> Taylor, L. (2018). Housing And Health: An Overview of The Literature. *Health Affairs*. doi:10.1377/hpb20180313.396577
- <sup>vi</sup> Bryant-Stephens, T., Strane, D., Robinson, E., Bhambhani, S., & Kenson, C. (2021). Housing and asthma disparities. *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, 148(5): 1121-1129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaci.2021.09.023>
- <sup>vii</sup> Wang, M., Narcisse, M., & McElfish, P. (2022). Higher walkability associated with increased physical activity and reduced obesity among United States adults. *Obesity*, 31(2), 553-564. <https://doi.org/10.1002/oby.23634>
- <sup>viii</sup> Frank, L.D., Sallis, J.F., Conway, T.L., Chapman, J.E., Saelens, B.E., & Bachman, W. (2006). Linking Objectively Measured Physical Activity With Objectively Measured Urban Form: Findings From SMARTRAQ. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 28(2 Suppl 2), 117–125.
- <sup>ix</sup> Ewing, R., & Cervero, R. (2010). Travel and the Built Environment: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 76(3), 265–294. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944361003766766>
- <sup>x</sup> US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). Benefits of Physical Activity. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/index.htm>
- <sup>xi</sup> Kwon, K. and Akar G. (2022). People with disabilities and use of public transit: The role of neighborhood walkability. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2022.103319>.
- <sup>xii</sup> Schreuer, N., Plaut, P., Golan, L., & Sachs, D. (2019). The relations between walkable neighbourhoods and active participation in daily activities of people with disabilities, 15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2019.100630>.
- <sup>xiii</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2023). Fast Facts on Transportation Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Retrieved from <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/fast-facts-transportation-greenhouse-gas-emissions>
- <sup>xiv</sup> US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Climate and Health - Air Pollution. Retrieved from [https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/air\\_pollution.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/air_pollution.htm)
- <sup>xv</sup> National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. (2022). Health Impacts of Air Quality. Retrieved from [https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/programs/climatechange/health\\_impacts/asthma](https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/programs/climatechange/health_impacts/asthma)
- <sup>xvi</sup> Christiansen, P., Engebretsen, Ø., Fearnley, N., & Usterud Hanssen, J. (2017). Parking facilities and the built environment: Impacts on travel behaviour. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 95: 198-206. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2016.10.025>.