



Local governments working together for a better metropolitan region

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**Adjunct member*

Date

Senator Barbara Mikulski
United States Senate
503 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Mikulski:

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) would like to add its voice to a growing chorus of organizations in support of efforts to reinvigorate comprehensive regional planning and implementation through enactment of the "Livable Communities Act of 2009" (S.1619). We are encouraged by this approach, and urge the advancement of any federal opportunity that provides incentives for regions and local governments to plan comprehensive future growth in a coordinated way.

The National Capital Region enjoys a strong and stable economy relative to other regions in the country. However, with nearly five million residents, and an expected two million more by 2050, we face serious challenges including traffic congestion, affordable housing, and disparities in health and education. The region's leaders recognize the need for long-term planning to address these issues and have worked, through COG, to create the Greater Washington 2050 initiative.

Greater Washington 2050 is a comprehensive regional initiative that seeks to develop strategies to incentivize local governments to locate affordable and accessible housing near employment centers, transportation options, and other community amenities based on shared goals and measurable targets. Congress' adoption of S.1619 would further this work to coordinate and implement sustainable planning and development across the metropolitan Washington region.

Now is the time to engage our federal partners with a reinvigorated commitment to regional comprehensive planning through a livability program that involves multiple federal agencies and patches together planning requirements to provide a more holistic approach to solving current challenges. COG applauds S.1619's efforts to:

- reaffirm the federal role in regionalism;
- coordinate regional assistance programs;
- conduct federal interagency meetings;
- determine federal livability goals;
- include regions and local governments of all sizes and make ups;
- establish competitive comprehensive regional planning and implementation grants;
- promote regional and local cooperation and service sharing;
- improve data collection, research, evaluation and analysis;
- ensure land use/zoning requirements do not impede upon local decision-making;
- and,

Thank you for your commitment to transparency, accountability, and replicability. As a member of the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), we look forward to working with you and your colleagues in Congress, the

Administration and appropriate federal agencies to determine how regions can be the leader in promoting the goals of the federal livability agenda, while helping restore economic prosperity in our nation's communities and foster partnerships and innovative practices that make each region a great place to live, play, work and invest.

Please feel free to contact David Robertson, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments at drobotson@mwkog.org or (202) 962-3260 for additional information or comment.

Sincerely,

Penelope Gross
Chair, COG Board of Directors

Cc: The Honorable Christopher Dodd, Chairman, U.S. Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee
Mr. Fred Abousleman, Executive Director, National Association of Regional Councils



Reasonable accommodations are provided for persons with disabilities. Please allow 7 business days to process requests. Phone: 202.962.3300 or 202-962.3213 (TDD). Email: accommodations@mwkog.org. For details: www.mwkog.org