

Maryland Legislative Session Report

May 2024





Cynthia Marshall
Executive Director, AIM-PATH-ACT

Reflection

ACT, AIM, PATH, and our partner organizations strategically worked together in the State House this year with significant results. It was our first year as three organizations working together on multiple issue areas at the same time, and preparation for where we want to go as a statewide collective. Together, **we helped pass three key pieces of affordable housing and climate equity legislation** that will make a real difference in people's lives.

We **achieved recognition** from legislators because of our collective power; one advisor to the governor referred to us as an "army." We **developed many leaders** who connected the issues in their communities to statewide policy and gained confidence speaking with their elected officials.

Lessons Learned

We also **learned some lessons** that will help us be even more effective in the future:



- Among the groups working on climate equity and affordable housing, we contribute specific and unique strengths. This includes our ability to **turn out everyday people** to talk directly to their legislators, **our diversity** in geography, race, socioeconomic background, and faith, as well as our strength in key districts with influential legislators.
- **Being there in person** was important. Many of our most important conversations happened with legislators or staff as they were walking from meeting to meeting.
- What mattered most to legislators, especially at the end of the session, was **hearing directly from people in their districts**. None of our bills passed before the last three days of the session. At that stage, our people in key districts directly contacted their legislators, which helped the bills move out of the committees with few compromises. To be more powerful moving forward, we need to build out this ability to connect our members with their Senators and Delegates.

We had a **strong start** this year. We will now take time to evaluate more closely how we did, strategize about who to build relationships with and what policies to work on next, as well as what organizing we need to do to move the state over the next 5-10 years.



Our Impact: By the Numbers

468

CAMPAIGN
PARTICIPANTS

51

MEETINGS WITH
LEGISLATORS

312

EMAILS SENT TO
LEGISLATORS

137

PEOPLE CAME TO
ADVOCACY DAYS

3

BILLS WE HELPED
PASS

1

ADDITIONAL BILL
INCLUDED



Leader Testimonies



Djamila Bah
AIM



I wanted to be part of the statewide campaign because it affects people that I know and the community that I live in. People I know are experiencing high levels of dangerous NO2 gas or are at risk of getting evicted. We had to do something to improve our community's health and living conditions.

We all have rights and no part of the state should be left behind. We need EmPOWER to electrify every neighborhood, not just certain parts of the state. We also need affordable housing so people can have a choice of living where they work.

Seeing the EmPOWER, tenants' rights, and affordable housing bills passed was really exciting for us. It showed that when communities and organizations come together, our problems can be resolved. Many voices make a bigger impact than one voice.



ACT, AIM, and PATH are the real deal. They don't look down on anybody and work with us. They love people with different circumstances regardless of creed or color. Everybody in our organizations is of one accord.

When we went to the State House for advocacy days, I got to see in person what the legislators do and talk to them. I could see the process of how bills get passed and have a say in the process. I came home bragging because I felt like a VIP.

Words cannot describe how important it was to get these bills passed. I even got to attend the bill signing ceremony and take a picture with the governor.



Janice Johnson
ACT



Legislative Outcomes



1. EmPOWER Reform

This act will set aside most of the \$350-million-per-year EmPOWER fund for energy efficiency and electrification upgrades for households and multifamily buildings. It will help protect our families' health and the climate by reducing indoor air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.



2. Housing Expansion & Affordability Act

This law will help address Maryland's affordable housing shortage by encouraging the development of more affordable housing.

- This includes new buildings that include at least 15-25% affordable units, and are located within 0.75 miles of a train station, or on nonprofit, congregational, or state land.
- The law incentivizes these types of developments with a 30% density bonus.
- It allows duplexes and quads to be built in single-family areas near transit and allows residential buildings to be mixed into commercial areas.
- It allows manufactured (mobile) homes to be built in single-family areas, providing more affordable options.
- Overall, this will help families establish roots in communities close to their jobs, families, and support networks. It will help prevent people from having to move out of our communities.



3. Renters' Rights & Housing Stabilization Act

This law will provide important protections for renters. Specifically:

- It will make it more expensive for landlords to file an eviction, making it less likely landlords will evict renters over minor issues like overdue rent.
- The revenue gained from the eviction fee will go towards the rental voucher program and legal aid for tenants.
- It will limit landlords from charging more than one month's rent as a security deposit. Many of our tenant leaders and participants in Turnaround Thursday said this would make a big difference in their lives.



4. Funding for Electrifying Multi-Family Housing

Our work influenced the Governor to prioritize the electrification of multi-family housing in the \$90M he budgeted for carbon reduction project. We were proud to be part of the announcement.



5. "Good Cause" Eviction

The last bill we supported, Good Cause (formerly "Just Cause") Eviction, did not pass, but it made it further than it ever has before. We will evaluate what it would take to get it passed next year and consider taking action on it next year.

Next Steps



1. **Get involved** in our campaigns. Join an Action Team focused on Affordable Housing, Climate Equity, Universal Pre-K, and more!

- ACT: Contact Katie Zinler: katie@actaaco.org
- AIM: Contact Tanushree Isaacman: tanushree@actioninmontgomery.org
- PATH: Contact Takeiya Smith: takeiya@pathmaryland.org



2. **Sign up** for email updates to stay informed on our campaigns.

- ACT: Contact info@actaaco.org
- AIM: Contact admin@actioninmontgomery.org
- PATH: Contact communications@pathmaryland.org



3. **Follow us** on social media.



- [@ACTAnneArundelConnectingTogether](#) [@ActionInMontgomery-AIM](#)
[@PathPeopleActingTogetherInHoward](#)



- [@actforpower](#) [@aimforpower](#) [@pathforpower](#)



- [@actforpower](#) [@actioninmontgomery](#) [@pathmaryland](#)



4. **Donate** to support our work.

- [ACT](#)
- [AIM](#)
- [PATH](#)

Thank You



Thank you to everyone who worked to make these victories happen. Every time you showed up to an advocacy day in Annapolis, emailed or called your legislators, and spread the word to your communities, it made a big difference. Thank you also to all of the wonderful non-profit partners we worked with to effectively advocate for these climate and housing bills.