



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Susan Sullam 410-962-4436 or
410-960-2440 (cell)

Sue Walitsky 202-224-4524

March 14, 2008

SENATOR CARDIN ANNOUNCES PROPOSED TAX CREDIT PLAN TO STIMULATE HOUSING MARKET, TOUTS PROPOSALS TO HELP CURRENT HOMEOWNERS

Baltimore, MD – U.S. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), today joined with local representatives from Healthy Neighborhoods, St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center, the Greater Baltimore Board of Realtors, and Belair Edison Neighborhoods, Inc. and the Maryland Housing Coalition Task Force to announce a new major proposal to stimulate the housing market by promoting first-time purchases and to promote pending legislation designed to help current homeowners in crisis.

“Our economy is on shaky ground. Foreclosures are on the rise and credit is at a premium. But the American Dream of homeownership has been not lost,” said **Senator Cardin**. “We need to provide critical tools that will spur home purchases and provide a lifeline to current home owners in need. My tax credit will be an important balance to the counseling and finance proposals already in the legislative pipeline.

“To help stimulate the market by encouraging home purchases, I will soon be introducing the ***First-time Homebuyers’ Tax Credit Act*** that will provide a refundable income tax credit for the purchase of a principal residence by first-time homebuyers,” Senator Cardin announced at the event held in the Ednor Gardens neighborhood of Baltimore.

The credit is expected to apply to individuals and couples, as long as both were first-time homebuyers. It could be used for down payment or closing costs and would be targeted to ensure the stimulus reaches purchasers for whom a credit would most help.

Senator Cardin reiterated his support for the ***Foreclosure Prevention Act***, which he has co-sponsored. The bill, which will be taken up again in the Senate shortly, includes important provisions to help families on the brink of foreclosure by allowing bankruptcy judges to restructure mortgages on primary residences. It also expands revenue bond authority to restructure subprime and adjustable rate mortgages, and increases the availability of counseling for homebuyers seeking mortgages.

Joining Senator Cardin for the event were Mark Sissman, President of Healthy Neighborhoods, which provides innovative, below-market financing, along with counseling and grants to help rehabilitate neighborhoods; Anne Balcer Norton, Director of Foreclosure Prevention for St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center, who outlined the strains on housing counselors and the homeowners they strive to assist; Cathy Werner, President of the Greater Baltimore Board of Realtors, who gave an overview of the present real estate market and what impact Senator Cardin's proposed tax credit would mean to local communities, homeowners and buyers; Johnette Richardson, Executive Director of Belair Edison Neighborhoods, Inc., who discussed the challenges faced by communities struggling to assist potential homebuyers unable to secure financing; and Sally Scott, Chair of the Housing Coalition Task Force who talked about her groups success bringing information and resources to the attention of homeowners, housing professionals, local governments and non-profit groups.

Since June, Maryland has jumped from 40th nationally to 18th in number of foreclosures. New figures out this week from Realtytrac indicate foreclosures across the state rose 9 percent from January to February of this year, giving Maryland the highest rate of foreclosures in the Capital Region, with 1 out of 566 households in financial straits. Maryland had a 39% increase in foreclosures last quarter.

###