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Harford County Executive



ROBERT S. McCORD
Director of Administration

March 3, 2026

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama
Chair, House Economic Matters Committee
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Opposition to House Bill 1137 – Land Use – Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments – Authorization (Bring Back Main Street Act)

Dear Chairwoman Valderrama and Committee Members,

On behalf of the citizens of Harford County, I respectfully submit this letter in opposition to House Bill 1137.

Harford County recognizes the importance of expanding housing opportunities and supporting vibrant mixed-use development where appropriate. However, HB 1137 would override local zoning authority and require certain multifamily and mixed-use development types to be permitted by right in designated areas, regardless of local planning determinations or infrastructure capacity considerations.

Land use decisions are among the most fundamental responsibilities entrusted to local government. Harford County's Comprehensive Master Plan was developed through an extensive public process to carefully balance growth, infrastructure capacity, environmental stewardship, transportation planning, school capacity, and community character. Our zoning framework is intentionally aligned with that plan to ensure that development occurs in areas where public services and infrastructure can responsibly support additional demand.

By mandating that multifamily and mixed-use developments be permitted in specified areas, HB 1137 undermines the integrity of locally adopted master plans and circumvents the deliberate planning process that ensures growth is sustainable. Housing density decisions must account for road capacity, school enrollment, water and sewer infrastructure, emergency services response times, and fiscal impacts on taxpayers. These are considerations best evaluated at the local level, where officials have direct knowledge of existing service capacity and long-term capital planning commitments.

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama
House Bill 1137 Opposition Letter
March 3, 2026
Page 2

While the goal of increasing housing supply is understandable, imposing uniform statewide mandates on zoning authority does not recognize the unique conditions and resource constraints facing individual counties. Growth without corresponding infrastructure readiness places pressure on existing residents and strains public resources that have been carefully allocated through long-term planning.

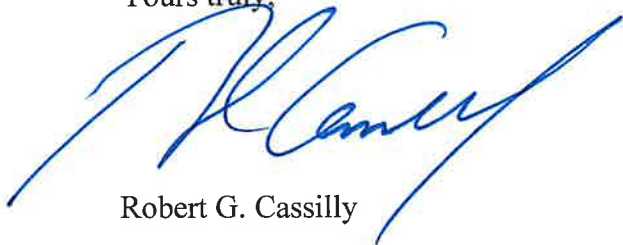
The primary challenge the counties face in supporting new housing developments are the limited resources for schools, roads, and public safety. Rather than helping counties to meet those needs, the state has consistently made it far more difficult for counties to grow. State contributions to school construction, maintenance, and operations continue to decline. Similarly, the state has greatly reduced funding for state highway capacity projects and sharply reduced the counties' share of Highway User Revenues that support county road projects. Public safety costs have spiked dramatically in response to the General Assembly's war on police that has made policing an undesirable profession. As the saying goes "follow the money." Support for quality housing cannot be properly achieved through unfunded mandates and power grabs.

Harford County remains committed to thoughtful housing development that aligns with our Comprehensive Master Plan and ensures that infrastructure keeps pace with growth. HB 1137 disrupts that balance by substituting locally developed planning frameworks for state-directed land use policy.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 1137.

Thank you.

Yours truly,



Robert G. Cassilly