



Town of Sharpsburg
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Honorable Chairman and Members of the Committee:

The Town of Sharpsburg wishes to join with municipalities throughout the State of Maryland in expressing our sincerest opposition to HB0239; a bill which, if enacted, would strike at the heart of the very concept of municipal self-governance, a principle under which incorporated municipalities in Maryland have operated since their founding.

While the stated broader objective of increasing affordable housing throughout the State may seem like a virtuous endeavor at first blush, it must be understood that zoning - particularly at the municipal level - is not a one-size-fits-all formula; and the passage of such sweeping legislation which groups very disparate communities under one overarching regulatory paradigm, irrespective of their individual circumstances, may result in insidious and unforeseen consequences, some of which may actually contravene the underlying intent of the bill.

Not only would this legislation sow increasing distrust of the State among localities by eviscerating locally implemented comprehensive plans and zoning initiatives across the region, as well as establish a dangerous precedent that the answer to State woes lies in chipping away at municipal autonomy and self-determination, but it may also have the adverse effect of artificially inflating values of current properties, placing them even farther out of reach of homebuyers, and incentivizing speculation by third-party investors that would only serve to stifle individual home ownership.

This legislation is an attack on the very essence of local community self-governance, and undermines the spirit of municipal partnership that was pledged by the current administration. The Town of Sharpsburg categorically opposes any and all efforts to diminish municipal autonomy, and instead encourages partnership over policy to address needs and achieve objectives in a mutually beneficial fashion. As such, we therefore urge an unfavorable report on the aforementioned bill.

Respectfully,

Jacob Martz
Vice Mayor, on behalf of the Mayor and Council
Sharpsburg, Maryland