



**MARYLAND
LEAGUE OF
CONSERVATION
VOTERS**

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February 12, 2026

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

HB239: Land Use - Zoning - Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026)

Chair Valderrama and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland LCV supports House Bill 239 with amendment. This legislation is taking strides to solve one of our state's major challenges – increasing opportunities for affordable housing. Maryland LCV has long supported smart growth principles and, this bill, strives to adopt density in appropriate, developable areas, which is an important tool for advancing not only smart growth, but also housing affordability, and climate resilience. We appreciate the Department's willingness to accept targeted amendments to this legislation to ensure provisions in the bill do not create unintended consequences for our ecologically sensitive lands, nor land preservation goals.

Maryland faces dual and interconnected challenges—addressing a need to build differentiated housing stock, while protecting the natural resources critical to the health of our communities and our state as a whole. Increasing density in already-developable areas can help address both. Thoughtfully planned, higher density development can reduce sprawl, lower vehicle miles traveled, and limit the need to extend costly infrastructure into undeveloped areas. These outcomes benefit not only the economy, but also air quality, water quality, and climate goals.

At the same time, Maryland LCV believes strongly that increased density should not come at the expense of ecologically sensitive areas, including wetlands, forests, floodplains, and critical habitats. These lands provide irreplaceable environmental services—protecting drinking water, mitigating flooding, sequestering carbon, and supporting biodiversity.

In addition to clarifying protected areas, the first proposed amendment also ensures areas most appropriate for conservation, not development, do not inadvertently assume a higher cost by being listed as higher density eligible, when, in fact, they are inappropriate for development. The second proposed amendment clarifies stormwater control provisions to maintain protected water quality, while still allowing for development in designated growth areas.

Maryland LCV is grateful to the Department of Housing and Community Development for their acceptance of the attached amendments and urges the House Economic Matters Committee to issue a favorable on House Bill 239.

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PROPOSED AMENDMENTS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION ENERGY ACT

On page 8, in line 24, strike “or”.

On page 8, after line 26, insert: “;

(iv) land within the chesapeake and atlantic coastal bays critical area, as defined in § 8-1802 of the Natural Resources Article; or

(v) forested land suitable for forest interior dwelling species, as defined in § 5-1607(c)(1)(iii) of the Natural Resources Article.”

On page 9, in line 1, after “connected” insert “within the next five years”



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