

Town of Bladensburg

Council Members

Ward 1

Trina Brown

Kalisha Dixon



Mayor

Takisha James

Council Members

Ward 2

Marilyn Blount

Carrol McBryde

February 10, 2026

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 36 – Land Use – Zoning – Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026).

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

On behalf of the Town of Bladensburg, I write to express serious concern with House Bill 239 – regarding Land Use and Zoning Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026) and to respectfully urge the Committee to re-evaluate in its current form, and I support amendments to this legislation, specifically Amendment (3) three, (9) nine, and (10) ten.

While I appreciate the intent to expand housing options across Maryland, HB 239 would do so by significantly undermining local land-use authority, replacing community-based planning with a statewide, one-size-fits-all mandate. The bill's prohibition on minimum lot sizes, limitations on setbacks and design standards, and restrictions on zoning distinctions, particularly the treatment of townhouses in single-family zones, would fundamentally alter how municipalities manage growth, infrastructure, and neighborhood character.

As Mayor of Bladensburg, a small municipality with limited land area and unique development pressures, I can state clearly that local governments are best positioned to balance housing needs with infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, and community context. Imposing uniform zoning standards across the state fails to account for differences among municipalities in stormwater systems, school capacity, traffic patterns, public safety resources, and aging infrastructure.

SB 36 would also limit towns' ability to use zoning to protect residents, preserve established neighborhoods, and plan responsibly for long-term sustainability. For many municipalities, lot size, setback, and design standards are not exclusionary measures; they are essential planning tools used to ensure compatibility, manage density, and prevent unintended strain on public services.

The Town of Bladensburg strongly supports the Maryland Municipal League (MML) position and joins other towns and cities across the state in seeking amendments to this legislation that erodes local control. Housing policy solutions should be collaborative, flexible, and incentive-based not prescriptive mandates that diminish municipal authority and accountability.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the House Economic Matters Committee reevaluate SB 36 in its current form and instead work with municipalities, MML, and other stakeholders to develop housing strategies that expand affordability without sacrificing local planning autonomy.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued service to Maryland residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Takisha D. James". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T' and 'J'.

Takisha D. James
Mayor, Town of Bladensburg

C: Angelica Bailey Thupari, angelicab@mdmunicipal.org