



February 10, 2026

**To:** House Government, Labor and Elections Committee  
Of the State of Maryland

**Subject:** **RE: HB 0239 – Land Use – Zoning – Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026)  
Written Testimony -Unfavorable**

Dear Honorable Members of this Committee:

On behalf of the City of Salisbury, I am forwarding written testimony for your consideration against the proposed bill. We do not support the State setting limitations on zoning where the impact will serve to nullify plans required by the State that jurisdictions have created with the input of their communities to determine where and how they want to grow, what growth is appropriate for the existing infrastructure, and the vision for their communities into the future. This “one size fits all” approach to growing the State’s housing supply is an affront to the very foundations of planning and zoning in the State and the Country that will have unplanned consequences.

Our contention is that the bill:

1. Disenfranchises residents of meaningful planning of their communities.
2. Weakens or nullifies existing Comprehensive Plans and Plans in process that have carefully considered where and how growth should occur based on the conditions of the individual jurisdiction.
3. Will create a significant financial burden to rewrite Comprehensive Plans and zoning codes.
4. Have unplanned impacts to City infrastructure including water and sewer capacity, school capacity, traffic, availability of street parking, and emergency services including medical, fire and police.

While we acknowledge the housing crisis, this should not be used as an excuse to undo the visions for the future and plans we created with our communities by limiting the ability of our zoning codes to have development standards that bring the plans to fruition.



**HB0239 – Land Use – Zoning – Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes act of 2026)**  
**City of Salisbury Written Testimony - Unfavorable**  
**February 10, 2026**

We do not support the State setting limitations on zoning for local jurisdictions as proposed in HB0239. The State has, and generally must have, a “one size fits all” approach but this is not an appropriate approach for planning at the local level. There is more than a century of case law in the United States upholding local approach to land use restrictions. The US Department of Commerce created the Standard City Planning Enabling Act in 1928. The State adopted laws allowing for local zoning authority in 1927 and planning authority in 1933. Granting local authority for planning and zoning is an acknowledgement that land use decisions are best made and planned for at the local level by Commissions and residents that understand the unique conditions of their communities.

The adoption of HB0239 would be an overreach of State power that would continue to undo nearly a century of planning and zoning at the local level in the State.

1. Local Comprehensive Plans will be weakened and will need to be rewritten, with the citizens that had participated in their creation effectively having been silenced.
2. The costs of rewriting plans and significantly updating zoning codes will be a substantial burden with no mechanism for funding those costs imposed upon municipalities.
3. The law will have unplanned impacts to City infrastructure including but not limited to:
  - water and sewer capacity,
  - school capacity,
  - traffic,
  - availability of street parking, and
  - emergency services including medical, fire and police services.

The City, County and Board of Education have created plans to address capacity and population growth for public services, but this change would require all of these plans to be reconsidered.

Building homes on smaller lots with less side setbacks would greatly reduce or eliminate on-street parking, while reducing available lot area for onsite parking, which is particularly concerning for areas like the City of Salisbury where reliable public transportation is not yet developed or feasible and most residents are car dependent. This may also create public safety concerns with area less visible from the street and more opportunity for the spread of fire from one house to another. Local zoning regulations help address these issues.

We ask that the Committee not support this bill for the reasons set forth above. Local jurisdictions and their residents should determine where and how they want to grow, what growth is appropriate for the existing infrastructure, and the future vision for their communities.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 410-548-3170, or send an email to [bjackson@salisbury.md](mailto:bjackson@salisbury.md).