

Dear Members of the State House and Senate,

While I commend the state for wanting to expand housing options, I am strongly opposed to House Bill 0239 and Senate Bill 036, as I do not believe they will achieve the goal of affordability and will, instead, create long-term, irreversible damage to our schools, infrastructure, environment, communities, and to affordability itself.

The bills, as written, reek of republican- and investor-based agenda wrapped in liberal buzzwords and ideology, and I am ashamed of any democrat who would vote for them. Special interest lobbies are selling us a dream, no, make that a nightmare, at our own expense.

I have testified at great length in Howard County about its adoption of CB3-2026 (ZRA218) under HB1466, and would question why we need to create these additional bills that would further diminish local legislation in regard to land usage. If these bills should go forth, which I strongly oppose, we must include the following amendments as I recommended to our local planning board and county council:

1. **Local legislation MUST have oversight into their land use and management. WE MUST HAVE GUARDRAILS. ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL.** We have areas across the state with flood risk; mountains; protected parks, wetlands, and green spaces; our Bay; parking concerns; lack of sidewalks for our children to walk safely to school; general infrastructure such as transportation, aging power lines, sewer, and septic ... this list goes on and local legislature must be able to determine what is best for its own growing populations
2. **Local legislation MUST have the right to impose setback requirements** based on capacity, safety, and regional conditions. This for fire and policy, walkability, power lines, flood-prone areas, mountains, railway lines, environmentally sensitive areas, historic preservation, rivers ... streams ... specimen trees.
3. **We MUST, MUST, MUST HAVE OWNER OCCUPANCY.** Otherwise, investors will come in, purchase single-family homes, and convert them into duplex or triplexes, or even worse, build detached ADUs, subdivide, and build more duplexes and triplexes. We have seen how investor-driven development overwhelms our schools and infrastructure with no reasonable way to solve the problem. "Just move the kids," is what we are told time and time again, and that burden falls on our Boards of Education, who should be focusing on educating our children, not fixing trickle-down problems that the state creates.
4. **We MUST protect our schools and our children.** We must require hefty and palpable fees for building in areas where schools are overcrowded and density is a concern!

WE cannot run unplanned and unchecked. These bills, as written, strip every reasonable protection in place. We cannot allow for larger, more expensive homes built on small lots closer together ... and we KNOW this is what will happen and that this will further increase pricing for both rents and homeownership. Housing density will not create a supply and demand because it

will require us to build faster without consideration and ignores realities such as construction costs, loan interest rates, our fragile ecosystem, schools, roads, public-use buildings ...

These bills do not seek to create affordable HOMEOWNERSHIP, which is the best way to build stable communities and keep investments IN the community. But rather, these bills introduce ways for large-scale investors to buy up land and build god only knows what on it. Here in Howard County, we have a tendency to do that and we have faced serious consequences because of it, such as the floods in 2016 that affected more than just our beloved Main Street, and then again in 2018, when we lost a colleague and friend who was beloved and recognized across the state of Maryland.

We have seen here in Howard County how fast construction continues to price families out of places to live. Howard Hughes has been gobbling up the city of Columbia with minimum rates of \$2400 for a 2BR apartment, building in overcrowded schools zones and triggering stressful and expensive “emergency” school redistrictings.

I would also look to the rapid development along the Route 1 corridor in College Park and Riverdale, where I lived while working in Washington. Home prices skyrocketed as development increased at an alarming rate, and height, and now traffic is worse than ever and **students are being priced out of place to live**. And those prices will only continue to go up ...

This is NOT affordable housing ... this is favoring special interest lobbies. We should instead be targeting underutilized spaces and revitalizing areas that have little life left in them as opposed to sweeping changes that have zero planning or oversight. And we should be focusing on home voucher programs that help the marginalized to afford homes instead of just paying the rent.

Lastly, please explain to me how does this actually create housing choice when we take away the right to choose?

Again, I repeat, HB0239 and SB036, as written, reek of republican- and investor-based agenda wrapped in liberal buzzwords and ideology, and I am ashamed of any democrat who would vote for them. Special interest lobbies are selling us a dream, no, make that a nightmare, at our own expense.

Yours in Advocacy,
Cindy LaFollette
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