

Testimony – Alex Berland

Maryland Just Power Alliance

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

HB239

My name is Alex Berland. I'm here with Action in Montgomery, a member of the Maryland Just Power Alliance to support HB239. I grew up in Columbia, Maryland—which I still consider my home. After graduating from Saint Mary's College of Maryland and starting a well-paying job, I had to leave Columbia, because there were not affordable housing options—even with a roommate. I live in Kensington now, where my rent is affordable, because I share a 4 bedroom house with 4 other young adults. All five of us grew up in Maryland, four of us have college degrees, and all of us work—four of us in full-time, career-oriented positions, and the other part-time while pursuing graduate education. This is how we all managed to afford to stay and start our careers in our home state—many of our friends have made the difficult choice to move out of Maryland and start their lives away from home.

While we can afford rent, this situation has drawbacks. We don't work close together, so three of my roommates commute over 40 minutes both ways. The house is crowded, and as we get more settled in our different careers and lives, living in a communal environment creates barriers. Two of my roommates are getting married—they want to buy a house and start a family, but it just is not possible in the foreseeable future if they stay in Maryland.

HB239 creates more options for housing—housing that is more affordable, and suits a wider variety of needs. This would be great for young adults and families, who typically look for smaller housing, but it doesn't just help people like me. Data has consistently shown that increasing the supply and variety of homes makes housing more attainable at all income levels. This would benefit everyone in Maryland who struggles to afford housing because they don't have the luxury of splitting rent between five working adults. I urge this committee to pass HB239 for all the working parents, teachers, nurses, young professionals, seniors and other proud Marylanders who love their home and want the option to stay here.