

---

**ROBERT G. CASSILLY**  
Harford County Executive



**ROBERT S. McCORD**  
Director of Administration

---

February 10, 2026

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama  
Chair, House Economic Matters Committee  
230 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter in Opposition on HB 239 – “Land Use -Zoning – Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026)”

Dear Madam Chair and Committee Members,

On behalf of Harford County, I respectfully submit this letter in opposition to House Bill 239, the Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026.

Harford County strongly supports the goal of increasing housing affordability and expanding housing options for Maryland residents. However, HB 239 advances that goal through broad state preemption of local zoning authority by undermining the ability of counties to responsibly plan for growth, infrastructure capacity, public safety, and community character.

Land use and zoning decisions have long been a core function of local government. Counties are best positioned to balance housing needs with real-world considerations such as road capacity, school enrollment, water and sewer availability, stormwater management, environmental protection, and emergency services. HB 239 replaces this locally informed decision-making with a one-size-fits-all mandate that does not account for the significant differences among Maryland’s communities.

The bill would prohibit counties from enforcing locally adopted standards related to lot size, setbacks, building dimensions, and design requirements in areas served by public water and sewer. These tools are not arbitrary barriers; they are essential planning mechanisms developed through public processes to ensure orderly development, neighborhood compatibility, and long-term fiscal sustainability. Removing them limits a county’s ability to manage growth responsibly and shifts the costs of infrastructure and service impacts onto existing residents and taxpayers.

Additionally, allowing subdivision and additional housing types by right, without adequate local discretion, raises concerns about cumulative impacts on schools, transportation networks, and public safety resources. Counties must retain the flexibility

*Harford County Celebrates 250 Years ~ 1773-2023*

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama  
February 10, 2026  
Page 2

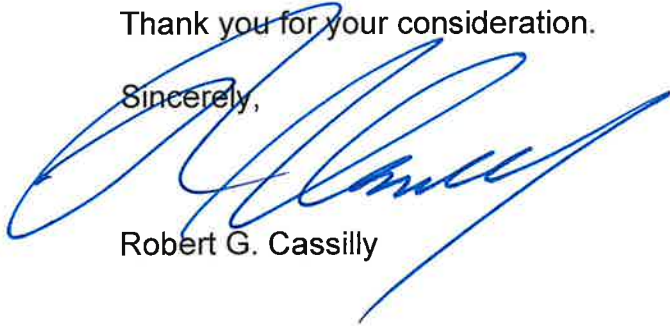
to phase growth, require appropriate improvements, and tailor zoning standards to local conditions.

Counties are already actively engaged in housing solutions, including zoning reforms, mixed-use development, and targeted incentives for affordable and senior housing. These efforts are most effective when shaped locally, in partnership with residents and stakeholders, rather than imposed uniformly by the State.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to oppose HB 239. Sustainable housing policy requires collaboration, not preemption, and counties must remain empowered to plan for growth in a manner that reflects the needs and capacity of their communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Cassilly