

Dear Economics Matters Committee,

HB239 needs significant safeguards in place to protect infrastructure and quality of life. I am writing to express my concerns that this bill subsumes Howard County's councilmanic power to decide local zoning issues. This bill is overbroad in its restrictions on a county's ability to react to density changes within a community. Roads, schools, police, fire, EMS, and other services need to be carefully balanced with housing so that quality of life issues are not degraded. Though this bill provides flexibility on environmental and safety issues, it provides little flexibility elsewhere.

This bill's restrictions on setback requirements and minimum lot sizes, as well as the addition of townhomes by right, effectively ends traditional single-family zoning. While that may be the at least some of the point of this bill, doing so by opening development floodgates to drastically change neighborhoods quickly, without any plan for "gentle density", will result in significant unintended results (such as infrastructure deficit noted above)

Housing is not the only economic matter that should be evaluated in this bill. Infrastructure needs of counties are crucial as well. Please add amendment to this bill which is in keeping with the spirit and law of Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances.

Thank you,

Ryan Powers, Howard County