



Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore, Inc.

February 10, 2026

Delegate Kriselda Valderrama, Chair
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 239

Honorable Chair Valderrama and Members of the Committee:

I am the Chief Executive Officer of Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore (NHS), and a resident of Baltimore City. Our organization believes that economic and social justice are a right for all residents and communities. We promote this belief by removing barriers of access to homeownership, helping resident access resources to maintain their homes, and supporting communities historically impacted by systemic disinvestment.

Last year, NHS helped 251 families and individuals purchase homes. We work primarily with first-time homebuyers. There are several barriers in place that impact home buyers' ability to purchase a home. One of the primary issues confronted is the ability to find an affordable home that meets their family's needs. There are several factors that contribute to this lack of suitable inventory. One issue is the rising cost of housing in Baltimore City over the past 6 years when we have seen an over 50% increase in home prices. Another major issue is the lack of inventory. HB239 directly impacts both issues. As a developer we build what is allowed by the local government. This impacts what type of homes can be built. In many areas, we have single family homes on larger lots because that is what zoning requires. If you want to increase density to provide housing for additional families resulting in economic growth it is important to expand what is allowed to be built on properties. Facilitating development on smaller lots and allowing town house development will result in more housing units being constructed. We have found in our work that smaller homes are popular with many home buyers who prefer to have reduced external property maintenance and more affordability on their property.

One argument that typically emerges in conversations about what and how much to build is local control. In Maryland many have fought for many years to preserve local control. This typically results in higher levels of restriction and higher cost homes being built. As a state that currently has a shortage of over 96,000 housing units we have created a housing crisis through our public policy. If we continue to prioritize local control, our housing shortages will continue to grow, resulting in more younger people being priced out of Maryland. This is a tragic outcome for a state that has so much to offer to families. Local governments have failed to meet the needs of Maryland, contributing significantly to our current challenge. It is important to state leaders to intervene and develop policy to address these challenges. Without state intervention it is likely



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that Maryland continues to see our population decline with significant out migration of our younger residents.

Current policy is also costing Maryland millions of dollars annually in lost revenue. Every family that moves out of Maryland due to the availability and cost of housing costs the state taxes generate from income, sales tax, and property taxes. This lost revenue is thousands of dollars annually for the state from a lower income household with \$50,000 in annual household income. The loss increases for higher income families. Not addressing the housing shortage is significantly contributing to the economic challenges currently being encountered in Maryland. Growing our state population by supporting construction of additional residential units in responsible ways as proposed in HB239 will be one important component in addressing these challenges.

HB 239 provides reasonable changes to housing policy that will result in additional housing development. It is important for the state to provide leadership in this work. We applaud the Moore administration for proposing common sense solutions designed to bring real solutions to Maryland. We ask that the Committee issue a *favorable* report on HB 239.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel T. Ellis".

Daniel T. Ellis
Chief Executive Officer



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