

Observations on HB 239/SB 36

Position: UNFAVORABLE

To: Maryland State Senators and Legislators

From: Susan Garber, North Laurel/Savage area of Howard County

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Please forgive the irregularity of my providing testimony for members of both chambers on their related bills in a single document. Time limitations and caregiver responsibilities make it impossible for me to address you in separate efforts.

My position on HB 239/SB 36 is not only unfavorable. It is highly unfavorable. I consider the legislation downright insulting on numerous levels.

- 1.) It carries the tone and verbiage of what can only be perceived as a power grab by the state to claim ownership of what has been a county's role in developing and administering zoning regulations decisions in collaboration with citizen residents.

Recently there has been great reaction/objection to our federal government trying to dictate for example, voting regulations to the states. How does this Starter and Silver Homes Act differ in its approach?

Authors and supporters of the Bill work hard to make us believe that this Act will result in more affordable housing for those struggling to participate in the American dream: ownership of a house with a yard, large enough for children and pets to play, vegetables to be raised and shade in which to relax and entertain family and friends. There is **nothing** in this bill that assures lower pricing. What it does ensure is a

loss in quality of life by way of minimizing a natural environment, overcrowding schools and roads, etc.

It's hard not to detect the heavy hand of the development and real estate communities, "the political and investor classes," in suggesting and lobbying for these bills.

Most outrageous and objectionable to me are the provisions that absolutely **nothing** dictated in these bills **can be changed** by local governments. I suspect it was the fact that for example, Howard County Citizens and the Planning Board insisted on owner occupancy in their regulations for Accessory Dwelling Units. This step was taken to prevent the aforementioned people from buying up homes to generate great profits without regard to the degradation of communities in the single-family zones.

The exemption of the regulations from historic communities is laudable. However the instant cut off—without notification to the town of Savage which predates Elkridge and is truly a community of **homes** rather than a business community—is inexcusable. The 2025 cut-off should definitely be changed/amended.

I urge you to drop this dreadful overreach to produce a large increase in density. There ARE natural limits to what long term residents will tolerate. Don't provide one more reason to leave the state.

Respectfully submitted without holding back,  
Susan Garber