

Good afternoon, Madam Chair, members of the Committee.

My name is Stacy Link, Mayor of the Town of Sykesville, and I am here today not only on behalf of my own community, but alongside mayors across Maryland who are joining me because we all understand exactly what is at stake.

Let me be clear from the start: municipalities want more housing. We want the same outcomes the Administration wants — more inventory, more affordability, more options for young families and seniors. In fact, Sykesville is in the throes of updating our zoning ordinance. We are already modernizing zoning, encouraging infill, and planning for growth.

But HB239 does something fundamentally different.

It strips 157 municipalities of their ability to select how this happens in their communities— the very authority we use to ensure growth is safe, feasible, and fiscally responsible. And I am here to say, as plainly as I can: that is unacceptable.

This bill is built on the false premise that local zoning is a primary barrier to housing production. It is not.

Housing affordability is shaped by a multitude of factors: utility regulation, energy costs, environmental permitting timelines, infrastructure financing, and property tax assessments. Municipalities do not control most of these drivers — but we live with the consequences when residents can't afford their homes.

And here is the part that should give every member of this Committee pause:

Even DHCD's own data contradicts the one-size-fits-all mandate in this bill.

Governor Moore's "Housing Starts Here" executive order required DHCD to published housing inventory growth targets. According to DHCD:

- Sykesville — 1,601 housing units — is expected to add 89 units between now and 2030.
- Westminster — 8,345 units — is expected to add 464 units.
- Cumberland's target is 50 units.
- Hagerstown target— 978 units
- And per that same report, 41 municipalities in Maryland have fewer than 500 housing units total, representing 0.4% of the state's housing stock. Their entire target is simply to maintain what they already have.

DHCD knows — because they wrote the data — that municipalities are not interchangeable.

Different size, different infrastructure, different capacity, different needs.

And yet HB239 ignores all of that.

If the State wants legislation that actually produces housing, then use your own data.

Trust your own analysis.

Build a framework that reflects the reality you already documented.

Because here is the truth on the ground:

Theoretical capacity on a planning map is not the same as operational capacity in a water or wastewater plant.

Small towns — especially rural ones — are running systems near regulatory limits, with aging infrastructure, nutrient caps, and staffing shortages of licensed operators.

Mandating density without acknowledging these constraints is not just impractical — it risks public health, environmental compliance, and the financial stability of the very communities you expect to absorb this growth.

And now let me directly address DHCD's stated justification for this bill — because it does not hold up to real-world data.

DHCD claims that:

- ✓ “Townhouses are typically 25–30% less expensive than single-family homes.”
- ✓ “Creating new housing options 30% less expensive will unlock homeownership for many more Maryland families.”

That sounds compelling — until you look at actual Maryland data.

To reference DHCD's source, Redfin, Housing Market trends in our zipcode in South Carroll County, show Current Median Sale Price for Single Family Homes is less than that of Townhomes. While single family homes are at **\$557,500**, **Townhouse are selling for \$564,365**

Let me give you the real numbers from the Town of Sykesville, where we have built more townhouses than any other housing type in the last 15 years.

Raincliffe Townhomes (125 constructed 2011–2014)

- 2011: \$319,365 → first to come online
- 2014: \$364,340 → last to come online and sold to original owners; MEDIAN HOME PRICE in Sykesville that year \$357k

The very same house that was built and sold in 2011, sold again in 2016 for \$365k and again changed hands in 2020 for a sale price of \$405k. And now houses in that subdivision are selling for \$508k

Another townhome community came online in 2020 with its final home receiving U&O in 2024. Parkside at Warfield Townhomes (145 constructed 2020–2024)

- 2020: \$468,855–\$498,900 MEDIAN \$420k
- 2021: \$474,015–\$568,265 MEDIAN \$440k
- 2022: \$539,990–\$561 MEDIAN \$468k
- 2023: \$567,000 MEDIAN \$485k
- 2024: \$600,000 MEDIAN \$521k
- And in 2025, these units are now selling for \$700,000 with MEDIAN \$507,500

In other words:

Townhouses in Sykesville did NOT and do not sell for 25–30% less than single-family homes.

From 2011 to the present, they sold for more than the median.

So I ask this Committee:

Where is the data proving that HB239's mandated townhouse upzoning will produce affordability across Maryland's municipalities?

Because the real-world data we have says the opposite.

This is why municipalities are pushing back.

Not because we oppose housing — but because the State's rationale is not supported by evidence in Maryland's economy. DHCD cites data from South Carolina and Texas. How do those state's cost of living compare to ours? What's the cost of building in those economies? What are their tax structures?

And let me say this clearly:

Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances must remain intact.

APFOs are the only tool municipalities have to ensure that infrastructure, schools, roads, water, sewer, and public safety services keep pace with development.

\*\*Municipalities are not asking for loopholes.

We are asking for reality.

**We are asking for partnership, not preemption.\*\***

If the State wants real, measurable housing outcomes, the path is not HB239.

The path is a different bill entirely — one that is built through cooperation and not on comments two weeks after its introduction. We'd propose:

- Statewide housing goals based on DHCD's own data, which shows that Municipalities are responsible for only 30% of the Statewide housing inventory growth between now and 2030, with the rest in the hands of unincorporated areas.
- Preserving municipal APFO authority;
- Providing technical assistance, infrastructure funding, and cross-agency coordination;
- And allowing municipalities to determine how to meet the targets within their own boundaries.

Set the goals.

Hold us accountable.

But let us implement solutions that actually work in our communities.

HB239, as written, will not get you there.

But municipalities stand ready to help craft the legislation that will.

Thank you.