

**Office of the Mayor
City of Taneytown
Christopher G. Miller, Mayor**

TO: Whom It May Concern
FROM: Mayor Christopher G. Miller
DATE: 2/10/2026
SUBJECT: Written Testimony (OPPOSE) – HB0239 & SB36 (Starter & Silver Homes Act)

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Bill(s): HB0239 / SB36 – Starter & Silver Homes Act of 2026
Position: OPPOSE
Submitted by: Mayor Christopher G. Miller, City of Taneytown

Chair, Vice Chair, & Members of the Committee:

My name is Christopher G. Miller and I serve as Mayor of the City of Taneytown.

I submit this in opposition to HB0239 and SB36.

Let me start by saying this clearly: I understand that Maryland has a housing issue. People are struggling. Young families are priced out. Seniors are stuck in homes that don't fit their needs anymore. The general consensus being we need a better mix of housing solutions.

But these bills don't solve that problem.

What these bills do is strip local governments of the ability to govern locally & that's not an accident. Municipalities have elected leaders, planning commissions, and citizen boards for a reason. Residents trust them to protect the interests of the community, manage growth responsibly, and match development to infrastructure reality.

HB0239/SB36 is a direct attack on that system. This is not "housing policy." This is state preemption.

These bills tell local jurisdictions what we can & can't do with basic zoning standards, lot size, setbacks, coverage, design standards and more. It's essentially the State saying:

"Your community standards don't matter. Your local process doesn't matter. Your local capacity doesn't matter."

Look; if you take away local control, you're not making housing more affordable, you're just making it easier to build more units wherever it's easiest and most profitable. Community should shape community & this is a direct attack on that concept.

This doesn't fix affordability; it just pressures density

The housing crisis isn't just that "there aren't enough homes." It's that the homes being built are priced out of reach for average people.

So what happens when you force more density by right?

Developers sell more units, at whatever the market will bear, and local communities are left holding the bag for:

- traffic impacts
- school crowding
- water/sewer and treatment capacity
- stormwater burdens
- public safety response times
- the general quality of life impacts residents deal with every day

This is how you get more houses without getting more affordable housing & this is how you set municipalities up for failure.

Municipalities are already overburdened & infrastructure is not theoretical

Small municipalities aren't sitting on endless capacity. We operate in reality: staffing limits, treatment limits, permit limits, aging systems, and regulatory constraints that don't care what year a bill passes.

If the State wants more housing units, fine; but then the State needs to show up with:

- real infrastructure investment
- real transportation investment
- real school planning coordination
- and real funding to support the systems that growth depends on

Without that, this is just a mandate that shifts cost & consequences onto municipalities and residents.

Taneytown example: traffic & the bypass

In Taneytown, we've been working toward a bypass for decades, roughly 40 years, to address traffic and safety. Something we've repeatedly asked for help on.

Traffic is not just an inconvenience for us. It's a public safety issue. It affects response times. It affects kids walking. It affects neighborhoods being used as cut-throughs. We are trying to solve that problem the right way.

Now imagine the State tells us we have to accept additional density, while limiting our ability to address local concerns and manage concurrency.

That doesn't help us. It makes our core problems worse & takes away local ability to shape our future.

People have a right to local governance

This is the part that should matter to everyone, regardless of what town you live in:

People have a right to be governed locally.

- That's why municipalities exist. That's why residents elect councils and mayors. That's why we have planning commissions and citizen boards.

That shouldn't be stripped away for something as short-sighted as pushing density to create the appearance of "housing solutions," while not actually delivering affordability.

If the State wants results, work with municipalities, don't override them

If Maryland wants real progress, here's what partnership looks like:

- help fund zoning rewrites & modernization where communities want it
- provide technical assistance & planning support
- fund water/sewer/roads/stormwater needed for growth
- expand affordability tools that actually reduce cost for residents
- respect APFO-style growth management tools so infrastructure keeps up

That's how you deliver results for people. Not by preempting local government and telling communities to deal with the consequences.

HB0239 and SB36 don't solve affordability, and they do real damage to local governance and responsible growth.

For those reasons, I respectfully request an unfavorable report on HB0239 and SB36.

Respectfully,



Christopher G. Miller
Mayor of Taneytown

