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**ROBERT G. CASSILLY**  
Harford County Executive



**ROBERT S. McCORD**  
Director of Administration

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February 24, 2026

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama  
House Economic Matters Committee  
230 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Opposition to House Bill 778 – Land Use – Middle Housing Options – Requirements

Dear Chairwoman Valderrama and Committee Members,

On behalf of the citizens of Harford County, I respectfully submit this letter in opposition to House Bill 778.

Harford County recognizes the importance of addressing housing affordability and expanding housing opportunities. However, HB 778 represents a significant state preemption of local zoning authority and undermines the integrity of locally adopted comprehensive planning processes.

Land use decisions are among the most fundamental responsibilities entrusted to local governments. Through our Comprehensive Master Plan, Harford County has carefully balanced housing needs, infrastructure capacity, transportation planning, school enrollment, public safety services, environmental stewardship, and community character. HB 778 would require local jurisdictions to permit middle housing by right in areas historically zoned for single-family residential use and prohibit what the bill terms “unreasonable limitations” on such development.

This mandate removes local discretion in determining where increased residential density is appropriate. Infrastructure capacity, including roads, water and sewer systems, stormwater management, schools, and emergency response services, varies widely throughout our county. Growth must be aligned with available services and long-term capital improvement planning. A statewide, one-size-fits-all zoning directive does not account for these local realities.

Additionally, the bill’s prohibition on “unreasonable limitations” introduces ambiguity that could invite litigation and regulatory uncertainty. Height restrictions, lot coverage standards, setbacks, and parking requirements are not arbitrary barriers—they are tools used to ensure compatibility with existing neighborhoods and infrastructure capacity. Stripping local governments of the ability to apply these tools risks unintended consequences for established communities.

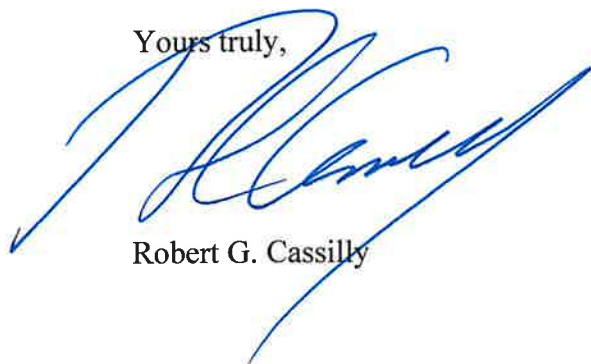
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Harford County supports thoughtful housing development that aligns with our planning framework and ensures that public infrastructure keeps pace with growth. HB 778 shifts zoning authority away from locally elected officials who are directly accountable to their residents and instead imposes a uniform mandate without regard to local conditions.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 778.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Cassilly", is written over the typed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Robert G. Cassilly