

February 10th, 2026

RE: HB239/SB36, Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026

Town of Colmar Manor Statement of Position

The Town of Colmar Manor supports efforts to expand housing options in Maryland, including starter homes and downsizing opportunities for seniors. As a small, built-out municipality in Prince George's County, Colmar Manor is committed to being part of the housing solution while ensuring that growth remains safe, affordable, and sustainable.

Successful housing policy must reflect local infrastructure capacity, preserve responsible growth management, and address rising non-housing costs—especially utilities and energy—which increasingly affect housing affordability.

Local Housing and Infrastructure Reality

Colmar Manor faces unique constraints common to small municipalities:

- Aging infrastructure and regulatory requirements
- Staffing and operational limitations
- High costs for system upgrades and expansion

While planning documents may show available capacity, real-world conditions often limit immediate growth. Mandating increased density without recognizing these realities risks service disruptions, environmental compliance issues, and financial strain on residents.

Preserving Local Growth Management

Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances (APFOs) allow Colmar Manor to ensure that infrastructure, schools, roads, and public safety services keep pace with development. These tools protect existing residents and align growth with available resources.

The Town strongly supports maintaining APFO authority and opposes policies that override local safeguards through broad preemption.

Energy and Utility Costs

Rising energy and utility rates are a major driver of housing unaffordability in Colmar Manor. Seniors, families, and fixed-income households are especially impacted.

Housing policy must address these costs alongside zoning reforms. Adding density without controlling energy and utility expenses undermines affordability goals.

Housing Affordability Is a Shared Responsibility

Local zoning is only one factor in housing costs. Property assessments, utility regulation, environmental permitting, development fees, and infrastructure financing all play major roles. Many of these are outside municipal control, yet their impacts are felt locally.

Effective solutions require coordination across state agencies and levels of government.

Support for Key Amendments

Colmar Manor supports the following amendments to strengthen the Act:

1. Capacity-Based Exemptions for Municipalities

Policies must recognize actual system capacity, not population size or theoretical availability. Small towns face the same constraints as small counties and should receive equal consideration.

2. Protection of APFO Authority

Local growth-management tools must remain intact to ensure development occurs where infrastructure can support it.

3. Time-Limited Implementation and Review

A sunset provision allows the State to evaluate whether the Act increases housing supply and affordability without creating unintended fiscal or infrastructure burdens.

Path Forward: Partnership, Not Preemption

Colmar Manor supports a collaborative approach that includes:

- Targeted state infrastructure funding
- Technical assistance for small municipalities
- Cross-agency coordination
- Data-driven evaluation
- Housing solutions work best when state and local governments partner rather than rely on broad preemption.

Conclusion

The Town of Colmar Manor is committed to addressing Maryland's housing challenges in a responsible and equitable manner. With appropriate safeguards and amendments, the Starter and Silver Homes Act can contribute to long-term affordability and community stability.

Without these protections, well-intended reforms risk placing new burdens on small municipalities and the residents they serve.

Colmar Manor stands ready to work with state and county partners to ensure housing policies succeed for all Maryland communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Monica Casañas".

Mayor Monica Casañas

Mayor of the Town of Colmar Manor

mcasanas@colmarmanor.org

C: 301-277-4920