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February 11, 2026

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama, Chair
The Honorable Lorig Charkoudian, Vice Chair
Members, House Economic Matters Committee
231 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: HB 0239 - Land Use - Zoning - Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026) -
LETTER OF SUPPORT**

Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Andre DeMattia. I am a Kent County business owner (one of the 12 largest in the county) and the newly appointed Councilmember for Ward 3. I'm writing to express my support for HB 0239, the Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026.

Maryland needs more attainable housing options for working families, first-time buyers, and seniors who want to downsize and remain in their communities. In many places, the cumulative effect of zoning restrictions and process requirements has made it unnecessarily difficult-and often financially unrealistic-to build smaller, more modest homes. That outcome hurts the very residents local government is meant to serve.

HB 0239 takes an important step by reducing cost-driving barriers that have contributed to today's affordability challenges, while still preserving core health, safety, and building standards. I also believe local jurisdictions should retain a reasonable role in planning and oversight-particularly around infrastructure, public safety, and objective standards that help new homes fit within existing neighborhoods.

At the same time, that local role needs clear limits so it cannot be used to delay, discourage, or effectively prevent attainable housing. The goal is not a free-for-all; the goal is a predictable, practical path where reasonable standards exist, but communities cannot make the rules so burdensome that nothing ever gets approved.

The balance I support is simple: allow local oversight, but do not allow local rules to become a practical barrier that prevents needed progress. This is similar to the approach reflected in the Telecommunications Act, where local governments keep authority over legitimate local matters such as managing public rights-of-way, but state and local requirements may not "prohibit or have the effect of prohibiting" service (47 U.S.C. § 253(a), (c)). In the housing context, that same balance means objective health, safety, infrastructure, and basic compatibility standards-without subjective, open-ended, or shifting requirements that become a de facto denial through delay, cost, or endless revision.

From both a business and local-government perspective, the housing shortage is not abstract. When housing options are limited to larger and more expensive homes, our workforce gets squeezed, seniors lose viable downsizing options, and younger families are pushed out. Expanding the availability of smaller, right-sized homes strengthens communities and supports local employers.

I support HB 0239's direction and would welcome any clarifying language that preserves objective local oversight while preventing undue burdens that effectively block attainable housing-especially where the practical effect is to make approval timelines unpredictable or requirements impossible to satisfy for modest homes.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 0239. Thank you for your consideration and for your work on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Andre DeMattia

Councilmember, Ward 3*

*Submitted in my individual capacity.