



Town of GLEN ECHO

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To: The Honorable Senator Brian Feldman
Chair, House Education, Energy and Environment Committee

The Honorable Senator Cheryl Kagan
Vice Chair, House Education, Energy and Environment Committee

Chair Education, Energy and Environment Committee

From: Hon. Dia Costello, Mayor, Glen Echo, Maryland

Date: February 13, 2026

Testimony for Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026: SB 0036 Favorable with Amendments

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Governor Moore's Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026. My name is Dia Costello, and I am the Mayor of Glen Echo, a small municipality in Montgomery County.

I offer this testimony to support the goal of expanding housing options, while also seeking to ensure affordability, consideration for local zoning authority, smaller town infrastructure realities and environmental sensitivities.

I recognize the urgent need for more affordable housing, including smaller homes appropriate for first-time buyers and our older residents. These goals are important and shared; however, the Starter and Silver Homes Act, as currently drafted, presents significant challenges for a small town that lacks the scale and infrastructure of larger jurisdictions.

Affordability Outcomes Are Not Guaranteed

While the Act is intended to promote affordability, there is no guarantee that newly permitted housing types will result in homes that are truly affordable to first-time buyers or seniors without additional affordability requirements or incentives. In high-demand areas such as Glen Echo, market-rate development alone may not achieve the intended outcomes.

Loss of Local Zoning Authority – Potential Negative Consequences

The Act's statewide overrides on minimum lot size, housing type, and subdivision standards, limit our Town's ability to tailor land-use decisions specific to Glen Echo. Our homes have small lots and are quite close together. Reducing our zoning authority has the potential to make Glen Echo more vulnerable to overdevelopment. There are also increased safety concerns such



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as ensuring fire and rescue can readily gain access between houses. Lastly, preserving local zoning authority allows Glen Echo to protect its mature canopy trees, which play a critical role in stormwater management, climate resilience, and regional environmental health; their loss could have negative long-term impacts that cannot be easily reversed.

Infrastructure Capacity Vulnerability

The Town has older stormwater systems, water and sewer capacity. The Act encourages increased residential density without providing corresponding funding or assistance to assess or expand infrastructure capacity. This creates a risk that development could outpace a town's ability to safely and sustainably support it.

Community Character Considerations

Glen Echo has a distinct historic identity and neighborhood that residents value. While community character should never be used as a pretext to block housing, state-mandated changes may erode public trust. Community buy-in is essential to successful housing policy.

In closing, although my primary focus is on the needs of Glen Echo, I have concern for all small municipalities in the state. I am not asking to be exempt from the proposed Act; however, I believe the uniqueness of smaller municipalities must be considered in order to meet housing goals in ways that reflect local realities.

I respectfully urge the General Assembly to consider amendments that acknowledge the unique constraints of small towns while advancing shared statewide housing objectives.

In service,

Hon. Dia Costello
Mayor
Glen Echo, Maryland

cc: Sen. Sara Love, Del. Marc Korman, Del. Sarah Wolek, Del. Theresa Woorman,
Councilmember Andrew Friedson