



Office of The Mayor Celina Benitez

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February 12, 2026

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 36, as written

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

On behalf of the City of Mount Rainier, we respectfully submit this testimony in **opposition to Senate Bill 36, as written**. While the City supports efforts to expand housing options across Maryland, HB 239 further removes municipalities from land use decision-making through state-level preemption and would undermine the limited but critical role cities play in shaping development outcomes.

In Prince George's County, municipalities do not hold primary zoning authority, with the exception of the City of Laurel. Instead, zoning and land use decisions are made at the county level. However, municipalities like Mount Rainier have historically played a **significant and meaningful role in shaping county zoning regulations** through extensive community engagement, municipal advocacy, and participation in county-led planning processes. These efforts require substantial time, resources, and coordination to ensure that local voices are heard and reflected in county policy.

SB 36 would take municipalities further out of the equation by imposing **state-level preemptive zoning mandates**, regardless of the collaborative processes currently in place between counties and municipalities. Even within a system where zoning authority already rests primarily with the county, this bill eliminates opportunities for municipal input and refinement, replacing them with one-size-fits-all standards that do not account for local conditions.

Mount Rainier is concerned that this approach disregards the realities municipalities must manage when new housing is introduced. Cities are responsible for addressing the downstream impacts of development, including increased demands on public works, stormwater infrastructure, street maintenance, insurance coverage, and other city services and amenities. These operational and fiscal responsibilities fall on municipalities, even when they lack final authority over zoning decisions. SB 36 would further disconnect decision-making from responsibility.

For these reasons, the City of Mount Rainier urges the Committee to **withhold a favorable report on SB 36, as written**, and instead pursue housing legislation that strengthens collaboration, expands local input, and equips municipalities and counties with tools to increase housing supply in a way that is responsive to local needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your consideration of municipal perspectives. Please feel free to contact me at 301.985.6585 or via email MayorBenitez@MountRainierMD.org if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Celina R. Benitez

Mayor Celina Benitez, City of Mount Rainier