

Testimony in Strong Support of Senate Bill 36 and House Bill 239

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Iryna Kopyi. I am a Maryland property owner, a licensed REALTOR® and a resident of Howard County, Maryland. I work daily with homebuyers, renters, sellers, and families trying to stay in the communities where they live and work. **I am submitting this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 36 and House Bill 239.**

From the perspective of someone who operates directly in Maryland's housing market every day, I can say plainly: we are facing a severe and persistent housing shortage, and it is driving prices and rents beyond the reach of many Maryland residents.

Maryland and Howard County Are in an Affordability Crisis:

Maryland now ranks among the eight least affordable states in the nation, and within Maryland, Howard County is widely recognized as the least affordable or one of the least affordable counties.

This is not because demand is unusually speculative or irrational. It is because supply is critically (and artificially) constrained.

According to data published by the Maryland Association of Realtors, many counties across Maryland currently have only one to two months of housing inventory. A healthy, balanced market typically requires five to six months of supply.

What is most striking is that this shortage exists:

- During the winter season, when housing activity is normally slower
- During a period of very high mortgage interest rates, which should reduce buyer demand

Even under these conditions, inventory remains near historic lows. That is a clear signal that Maryland's housing problem is structural, not cyclical.

What I See Daily as a REALTOR® :

In practical terms, this shortage means:

- Multiple offers on nearly every reasonably priced home
 - Buyers waiving contingencies just to compete
 - Renters unable to transition into ownership
 - Seniors unable to downsize within their own communities
 - Young families leaving the county or the state entirely
- These outcomes are not caused by lack of interest in housing—they are caused by lack of available housing.

Demand Is Likely to Increase, Not Decrease

Looking ahead, market pressure is likely to intensify. Mortgage interest rates are widely expected to decline, while employment in central Maryland remains stable and growing,

particularly in government, healthcare, technology, and education sectors. As rates fall, more buyers will re-enter the market. Without meaningful increases in housing supply, this will further accelerate price growth and further worsen affordability.

Housing Costs Are the Largest Driver of Inflation:

Housing and shelter costs are the largest single contributor to inflation. As long as housing remains scarce and expensive, families will feel inflation regardless of improvements in other areas of the economy.

From both a market and consumer perspective, there is no lasting solution to fix inflation without addressing housing supply.

Zoning and Overregulation Are the Core Barriers:

Maryland's housing shortage is not due to lack of builders, financing, or demand. It is driven primarily by:

- Restrictive zoning classifications
- Density limits unrelated to infrastructure capacity
- Minimum lot sizes and use restrictions
- Multiple layers of approvals and overlapping regulations

In counties like Howard County, the challenge is compounded by the very limited amount of land served by public water and sewer. Large areas are effectively prohibited from meaningful housing production, even where development would be environmentally and infrastructurally appropriate.

When land is limited and zoning restricts efficient use of that land, the result is predictable: too few homes and prices that continue to rise.

SB 36 and HB 239 Are Practical, Necessary Steps

Senate Bill 36 and House Bill 239 take important, measured steps toward addressing these constraints. They allow for more efficient use of land that already has infrastructure, reduce unnecessary zoning barriers, and help align housing production with actual market demand.

These bills do not eliminate local input or environmental safeguards. They simply recognize that Maryland's current framework is not producing enough housing to meet the needs of its residents.

Conclusion :

As a REALTOR®, I see every day how Maryland's housing shortage affects real families—not in theory, but in practice. Without action to increase supply, affordability will continue to deteriorate, inflationary pressures will persist, and more residents will be forced to leave the communities they call home.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Committee to support Senate Bill 36 and House

Bill 239.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Iryna Kopyy

Howard County, Maryland
Licensed REALTOR®