

Dear Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

SB36 needs significant safeguards in place to protect infrastructure and quality of life. I am writing to express my concerns that this bill subsumes Howard County's councilmanic power to decide local zoning issues. This bill is overbroad in its restrictions on a county's ability to react to density changes within a community. Roads, schools, police, fire, EMS, and other services need to be carefully balanced with housing so that quality of life issues are not degraded. Though this bill provides flexibility on environmental and safety issues, it is unclear how things like stormwater management won't be considerably affected by reducing setback requirements and allowing smaller lots.

This bill's restrictions on setback requirements and minimum lot sizes, as well as the addition of townhomes by right, effectively ends traditional single-family zoning. While that may be at least some of the point of this bill, doing so by opening development floodgates to drastically change neighborhoods quickly, without any plan for "gentle density", will result in significant unintended results.

The infrastructure needs of counties encompassing education, energy, and the environment are crucial and this bill does not do enough to protect them. Please add amendments to this bill in keeping with the spirit and law of Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances. Preserve the ability of a county to make local decisions.

Thank you,

Ryan Powers, Howard County