

Testimony – Alex Berland

Maryland Just Power Alliance

Land Use - Zoning - Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026)

SB036

My name is Alex Berland. I'm here with Action in Montgomery, a member of the Maryland Just Power Alliance to support SB036. I grew up in Columbia, Maryland—which I still consider my home. I always imagined my future would be in Columbia—that I might buy one of the houses I walked past around Wilde Lake, that I would walk down to the Lake Front to see fireworks every July, that my kids would go to the schools that gave me and my father and brothers a world class education. But after graduating college and starting a well-paying job, I had to leave Columbia. I could not find a place I could afford to rent, even with a roommate.

I live in Kensington now, where my rent is affordable, because I share a four-bedroom house with 4 other young adults. All five of us grew up in Maryland, four of us have college degrees, and all of us work—four of us in full-time, career-oriented positions, and the other part-time while pursuing graduate education. This is how we all managed to afford to stay and start our careers in our home state—many of our friends have made the difficult choice to move out of Maryland and start their lives away from home.

SB036 creates more options for housing—housing that is more affordable, and suits a wider variety of needs. This would be great for young adults like me. With smaller, more affordable units, I might be able to rent in Columbia, and maybe with one or two roommates. Maybe someday I could even afford to buy a house. But this bill doesn't just help me. Increasing the supply and variety of homes makes housing more attainable across the board. This would benefit everyone in Maryland who struggles to afford housing because they don't have the luxury of splitting rent between five working, childless adults. I urge this committee to pass a favorable recommendation on SB036 for all the working parents, teachers, nurses, young professionals, seniors and other proud Marylanders who love their home and want the option to stay here.