

SECTION 3 OF THE VILLAGE OF CHEVY CHASE

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Dear Brian J. Feldman, Chair, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee,

Please accept this as written testimony from Section 3 of the Village of Chevy Chase in opposition to SB 36, the Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026 (“SSHA”). We want to reiterate the concerns expressed in our January 30, 2026 letter, which we submitted jointly with 11 neighboring communities.

We strongly support increasing the supply of moderate and low-priced housing in Maryland, including in our own community. We believe SSHA would undermine that goal. By mandating increased density without protecting affordability, the bill is likely to drive up home prices in our area rather than reduce them.

Additionally, SSHA would place significant strain on already overburdened infrastructure. Our stormwater management systems already are stretched beyond capacity. Increased density would reduce our tree canopy and green spaces, heighten fire risk, and worsen congestion along already heavily traveled corridors such as Connecticut Avenue south of the Capital Beltway and Brookville Road, as well as on our extremely narrow 16-foot residential streets.

The bill also represents an unprecedented usurpation of local land use authority. Local governments are best positioned to assess on-the-ground conditions and community needs. SSHA disregards comprehensive master planning developed through extensive public engagement. It directly conflicts with HB 1167, approved unanimously in the Senate and 136-1 in the House less than a year ago, which confirmed our municipal authority to regulate construction of four or fewer residential units.

If the Committee nonetheless decides to advance this bill, we strongly urge you to exempt small municipalities such as ours, which must carefully manage development and density to prevent flooding and other direct safety hazards.

We also recommend amendments to address specific concerns:

1. Setbacks should respect the existing building lines in a community.

2. New construction should comply with local ordinances regarding stormwater and public safety, tree management, traffic and parking.
3. Multifamily construction should be allowed but be subject to affordability requirements and the same ordinances as other residential development.
4. Vague language prohibiting “indirect” interference with the provisions of the bill should be stricken to avoid confusion among developers and homeowners alike and avoid years of litigation.

The amendments proposed by the Maryland Municipal League and Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich provide a constructive starting point for improving the bill. If the Committee chooses to move SSHA forward, we encourage incorporation of those amendments in order to best incentivize more moderately priced housing in our state while preserving sensible local ordinances regulating setbacks, stormwater protections and the like.

Respectfully,



Kelly Mitch, Village Manager
Section 3 of the Village of Chevy Chase

