

My name is Charles Hendricks, and I am the mayor of Laytonsville, a town of some 750 residents in northern Montgomery County that was incorporated in 1892. My town has exercised zoning authority since 1958, but that has not stymied the town's contribution to the housing stock of our area. The town has grown rapidly in recent years. Since 2010 it has increased its housing units from 120 to 217, a growth of 81%, or an average increase of over 5% per year over the last 16 years. Yet we are a well-planned community with distinctive neighborhoods, single-family-homes of widely varying sales prices built on lots of various sizes, and an assortment of multi-family rental units.

I do not object to the state putting pressure on local governments to facilitate the construction of more housing units, but I believe that zoning preemption should not be applied until localities are authorized to make adjustments to their zoning ordinances not anticipated by their comprehensive plans to achieve the state's housing goals.

The Department of Housing and Community Development has published local housing unit construction goals for each year up to 2030. Why don't you give localities until 2028 to implement liberalized zoning rules to meet their housing construction approval goals and provide that failure to meet the goals by then would trigger the type of broad townhouse-favoring provisions envisioned by this bill over a gradually increasing percentage of the local jurisdiction's area? You could start with 20% of the local jurisdiction in the first year of non-compliance and increase that by 20% in each following year in which goals are not met. Let local jurisdictions decide which areas to subject to the zoning preemption, so that they can try to achieve the housing goals without having the areas available for townhouse subdivision grow to 100%.

I believe that the State of Maryland can enable the construction of the housing its residents need in cooperation with the elected officials of its counties and municipalities without subverting local community planning.