



TOWN OF HIGHLAND BEACH

(INCORPORATED 1922)

3243 WALNUT DRIVE

Highland Beach, Maryland 21403

Telephone (443) 837-5184

MAYOR

Crystal Chissell

TREASURER

Ronald L. Stokes, Sr.

COMMISSIONER

Michele Fuller

John P. Goodloe, Jr.

G. William Hunter

Linda Holmes Newton

February 17, 2026

Testimony in Opposition to
SB36 Land Use – Zoning – Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026)
By Crystal Chissell, Mayor
Town of Highland Beach

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

The Town of Highland Beach is **opposed** to SB36 because it will preempt local zoning authority in a way that will be detrimental to our community. Highland Beach is an example of why local context for zoning requirements and decision-making is essential.

The Town of Highland Beach is one of the smallest municipalities in Maryland. Because of our proximity to the Chesapeake Bay, our neighborhood is a prime target of profit-driven developers. The lot size and setback requirements in the Highland Beach Zoning Ordinance are more restrictive than what is proposed by SB36. We know from experience that SB36 would invite developers to build larger homes on small lots that are out of character with neighboring homes in our historic community and will exacerbate our stormwater management challenges. Larger homes will be sold at costs that exceed existing properties and will not contribute to affordable housing.

Highland Beach would fit into some of the exemptions that are being proposed as amendments to SB36. However, we know from experience that because of profit potential, developers will not hesitate to challenge the exemptions in court, requiring us to defend costly litigation.

We urge an unfavorable report on SB36.