

Greater Colesville Citizens Association

PO Box 4087
Colesville, MD 20914
February 13, 2026

Maryland General Assembly
Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Re: SB0036, Starter and Silver Homes Act

Dear Maryland Senator:

The Greater Colesville Citizens Association (GCCA) represents 3500 single-family and townhouse households around the intersection of Randolph Rd and New Hampshire Ave in eastern Montgomery County. GCCA urges the legislature to oppose bill SB0036 as it is written.

The bill, if enacted as presently written, it would eliminate most zoning for single-family detached housing in the county and state because the zoning could no longer require that the minimum lot size to exceed 5000 sq ft. That limit applies throughout state, even in more rural areas. If implemented everywhere, the state would become urban. We agree with current county policy that Montgomery County needs a range of housing sizes and we are sure that would apply across the state

The bill would not eliminate existing single-family development but any owner of such a property would be able to subdivide it by right into three lots. There is nothing to prevent a developer from purchasing a single-family house and replacing it by right with three townhouses. Thus, there would be no public review or review by the Planning Board, other than the creation of lots (without any meaningful restrictions).

The bill would likely create townhouse development that is not compatible with adjacent single-family detached housing in that the bill substantially reduces the set-back requirements and eliminates lot coverage requirements. Thus, essentially, the entire lot can be covered with a building.

The bill appears to eliminate any requirement for on-site parking or that the site be served by public transportation. With very small lots being proposed, residents will surely need to park on existing public roads. Most residential roads serving R60 (6000 sq ft) and R90 (9000 sq ft) zoned lots are already congested with parked vehicles or are too narrow to accommodate any parking. This bill will just exacerbate this problem. In a number of cases, the resulting parked vehicles would hinder the passage of larger vehicles, like fire, trash and buses (both school and public).

The bill fails to consider issues related to stormwater management and open space.

We agree that there is a shortage of affordable, starter housing, but this bill does nothing to address the affordable issue. Much of the current affordable problem is the

result of government regulation, especially fees. Montgomery County currently has a task force investigating fees, especially impact taxes.

The legislation needs to be amended to focus development where infrastructure exists or identified in county plans. We urge the state to follow the vision in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 general plan that focuses development in designated activity centers and along major roads that will be served with premium transit (Metrorail, Purple Line and BRT/Flash). Montgomery County recently approved legislation to focus development in these areas, much like the proposed bill, but focused where wanted and infrastructure can accommodate.

In short, the bill as written largely eliminates the zoning ordinance as it relates to single-family detached housing and opens Pandora's box for creating new problems or increasing existing problems. There are already large numbers of lots that could be built under existing zoning but it is not occurring on many of those lots, largely due to it being uneconomical. The legislature needs to address the affordability issue and focus development where infrastructure can support it.

GCCA urges opposes bill SB0036 as written and urges it be modified.

Daniel L. Wilhelm
GCCA President