



THE GREATER BETHESDA
CHAMBER of COMMERCE

Better business. Stronger community.

Testimony on behalf of the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce

In Support of

Senate Bill 36—Land Use—Zoning—Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026)

February 17, 2026

Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee

The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce (GBCC) was founded in 1926. Since then, the organization has grown to more than 650 businesses located throughout the Greater Bethesda area and beyond. On behalf of these members, we appreciate the opportunity to provide written comments on Senate Bill 36—Land Use—Zoning—Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026).

Maryland’s housing shortage has increasingly become an economic development issue as much as a residential one. Employers across industries are facing growing challenges attracting and retaining talent due to limited housing availability and rising costs. Senate Bill 36 addresses this issue by responsibly expanding housing choice within existing communities while maintaining essential building, safety, environmental, and historic protections.

The bill removes outdated barriers that have constrained housing supply. Importantly, the legislation does not mandate large-scale redevelopment. Instead, it enables gradual and compatible neighborhood evolution through gentle density — a practical approach that balances community character with the realities of modern housing demand.

From a business perspective, the benefits are significant. Increasing attainable housing options allows employees to live closer to their workplaces, improving workforce stability, reducing commute burdens, and strengthening employee retention. As more residents are able to remain in the communities where they work, local businesses benefit from stronger customer bases and a more reliable labor market. Small and mid-scale construction and real estate activity also generate local economic activity and job creation.

Senate Bill 36 recognizes that housing supply and economic competitiveness are directly linked. When housing options are limited, employers struggle to grow, and communities struggle to sustain vibrant commercial districts. By expanding housing choice in a measured way, the legislation supports residents, employers, and the long-term vitality of our regional economy.

For these reasons, the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce respectfully urges favorable consideration of Senate Bill 36.