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February 13, 2026

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

SB36: Land Use - Zoning - Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026)

Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland LCV supports Senate Bill 36 with amendment. This legislation is taking strides to solve one of our state's major challenges – increasing opportunities for affordable housing. Maryland LCV has long supported smart growth principles and, this bill, strives to adopt density in appropriate, developable areas, which is an important tool for advancing not only smart growth, but also housing affordability, and climate resilience. We appreciate the Department's willingness to accept targeted amendments to this legislation to ensure provisions in the bill do not create unintended consequences for our ecologically sensitive lands, nor land preservation goals.

Maryland faces dual and interconnected challenges—addressing a need to build differentiated housing stock, while protecting the natural resources critical to the health of our communities and our state as a whole. Increasing density in already-developable areas can help address both. Thoughtfully planned, higher density development can reduce sprawl, lower vehicle miles traveled, and limit the need to extend costly infrastructure into undeveloped areas. These outcomes benefit not only the economy, but also air quality, water quality, and climate goals.

At the same time, Maryland LCV believes strongly that increased density should not come at the expense of ecologically sensitive areas, including wetlands, forests, floodplains, and critical habitats. These lands provide irreplaceable environmental services—protecting drinking water, mitigating flooding, sequestering carbon, and supporting biodiversity.

In addition to clarifying protected areas, the first proposed amendment also ensures areas most appropriate for conservation, not development, do not inadvertently assume a higher cost by being listed as higher density eligible, when, in fact, they are inappropriate for development. Maryland LCV is grateful to the Department of Housing and Community Development for incorporation of this and other amendments we believe balance environmental protection with the goals of the bill. We encourage the committee to consider one additional amendment to allow appropriate limits on impervious surface development.

With these amendments Maryland LCV supports a favorable report on SB36.

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Amendments For the Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026

Department of Housing and Community Development Amendments we support:

On page 8, in line 24, strike “or”.

On page 8, after line 26, insert: “;

(iv) land within the chesapeake and atlantic coastal bays critical area, as defined in § 8-1802 of the Natural Resources Article; or

(v) forested land suitable for forest interior dwelling species, as defined in § 5-1607(c)(1)(iii) of the Natural Resources Article.”

On page 9, in line 1, after “connected” insert “within the next five years”

One additional amendment we urge consideration of:

On page 9, line 6, strike in its entirety lines 6 and 7.