

TESTIMONY
STARTER & SILVER HOMES ACT OF 2026
SB0036

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee, I am Jonathan R. Butler, Director, Prince George’s County Department of Housing & Community Development. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB0036, Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026.

Without a doubt, Prince George’s County supports the Governor’s vision to expand affordable homeownership opportunities for Marylanders. Further, the County’s Department of Housing & Community Development sincerely values the collaborative and synergetic relationship with Maryland Department of Housing & Community Development. Thus, Prince George’s County Government supports the proposed bill with amendment which aims to preserve local control, protect infrastructure capacity, and ensure measured, community-supported growth.

The Maryland Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026 is designed to increase housing supply by allowing smaller single-family homes and townhouses on reduced lot sizes statewide, overriding many local zoning rules. While well intentioned, SB0036 would have several undesirable impacts on Prince George’s County.

The Act imposes limits on local land-use autonomy, curbing the county’s ability to tailor zoning to community character and resident priorities. By allowing smaller single family homes on smaller lots and townhouses by right in residential areas, SB0036 effectively preempts local land use judgment and undermines years of county driven planning work, including implementation of Housing Opportunity For All and the County’s FY 2026–2030 Consolidated Plan, which already commit Prince George’s to expanding affordability in a manner aligned with infrastructure capacity, school enrollment, and transportation investments.

Increased density without corresponding investments in roads, transit, schools, and public safety would also strain county operating budgets. Smaller lots and added density could further strain stormwater systems, and utilities that were not designed for more intense use, leading to increased maintenance costs.

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Finally, a review of the 2030 Housing Production Targets for the State of Maryland, published January 1, 2026, demonstrates that Prince George's County is one of three jurisdictions whose average annual units produced exceeds its annual housing unit production needed. Note, Prince George's County leads the state in average annual units produced.

Because Prince George's County is already exceeding its annual housing production target, the restrictions on local zoning authority seem unnecessary.

For these reasons, Prince George's County seeks favorable consideration on the proposed Amendment to SB0036 - The Maryland Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026.

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