



Howard County Council

Deb Jung
Councilmember

District 4

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SB036/HB239: Support with Amendments
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 13, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members:

Please accept this written testimony in SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS for SB036/HB239. I represent District 4 on the Howard County Council and worked on the local implementation of the State required accessory dwelling unit regulations. Thanks to the flexibility of that State law, we adopted regulations that promote housing diversity, generate rental income for homeowners, and address the unique needs and characteristics of our County.

I support thoughtful efforts to address our housing challenges so that seniors on fixed incomes can age in place and young families can build generational wealth. I ask this Committee to include considerations of livability and local flexibility along with affordability during deliberations on this legislation.

SB036/HB239 requires three townhouse units or more on one lot. Our Howard County regulations determine density based on acreage not lots. Please consider terminology alignment for the sake of consistency.

SB036/HB239 adds townhouses to the definition of single-family housing. This means that townhomes will be by right in our rural districts where we do not have public water and sewer. Housing developments in these areas rely on private individual or shared septic systems that increase overall housing costs. Please evaluate the cost of private infrastructure on housing affordability in these rural areas.

SB036/HB239 reduces the minimum lot size to 5000 square feet, eliminates maximum lot coverage, and shrinks setbacks. A 5000 square foot lot could yield a 4000 square foot house with a 2000 square foot footprint. In Howard County, a 4000 square foot house could sell for \$800,000 or more. Please evaluate if eliminating or decreasing lot coverage and setbacks results in smaller, more affordable homes.

Counties rely on maximum lot coverage to control stormwater runoff. Setbacks provide places to plant street trees and combat heat islands. Rear setbacks give children a place to play that isn't in a parking lot or street. Please consider the direct impact that these land use tools have on flood control, climate change, and pedestrian safety.

SB036/HB239 restricts design and aesthetics requirements. Columbia is an aesthetically cohesive community with both design covenants as well as socio-economic and housing diversity. Columbia pioneered the idea of a planned community with good social values. It continues to be a "garden for growing people." Please recognize the successes of these communities in Maryland and consider amendments that preserve their character and promote livability as well as affordability.

If amended, SB036/HB239 could respect the Counties' local zoning authority, avoid school overcrowding, and increase housing supply without undermining public infrastructure, environmental protections, or stormwater management in flood-prone areas.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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