



**The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain**

Senate Bill 36

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

Position: Support
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Date: February 17, 2026
From: Alex Butler, Deputy Director of Government Relations

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **SUPPORTS** SB 36.

Bill Summary

Senate Bill 36 would address Maryland's housing shortage by removing local zoning barriers that prevent the construction of smaller, more affordable starter and silver homes. SB 36 would prohibit local jurisdictions (counties and municipalities) from enforcing several common zoning restrictions in areas served by public water and sewer. This bill is a vital component of the state's strategy to meet its 2031 climate goals while ensuring sustainable, resilient community growth.

Position Rationale

Under the Climate Solutions Now Act, Maryland is mandated to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2031. Reaching this goal requires more than just clean energy; it requires a fundamental shift in how we build. SB 36 promotes housing density in areas already served by public water and sewer, which is one of the most effective tools for reducing Maryland's carbon footprint. By enabling smaller starter and silver homes in established areas, this bill reduces suburban sprawl and vehicle miles traveled VMT, directly cutting transportation emissions. Additionally, smaller, more compact homes, generally consume less energy for heating and cooling, supporting our broader Building Energy Performance Standards. SB 36 will prohibit restrictive lot size minimums in areas connected to public systems, ensuring the maximization of our existing water and wastewater investments rather than extending new, costly lines into sensitive environmental zones. SB 36 is more than a housing bill; it is a smart-growth bill providing a pathway to a more equitable and environmentally sustainable Maryland.

Accordingly, MDE asks for a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 36.