



TOWN OF
Poolesville
MARYLAND

Senator Brian Feldman
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West Wing
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026

Dear Senator Feldman,

The Town of Poolesville is writing to express its opposition to the Starter and Silver Homes Act. The Town supports the goals of the act to increase housing affordability and diversity of housing types. But the approach this act takes to achieve these goals would severely limit local governments' ability to address local concerns by imposing a top-down housing policy. This letter will lay out the Town's concerns regarding the changes to local government authority in this act.

Zoning Setbacks and Lot Size

The Town of Poolesville is, as you know, situated within the agricultural reserve, and throughout its history, Poolesville has tried to maintain a balance between development and connecting to the heritage and economic environment of the Poolesville area. This is reflected in our comprehensive plan and the zone ordinance, which creates specific residential zones designed to reflect the local conditions in and around our community.

This legislation would make it impossible for the Town to maintain this balance, as it would eliminate the Town's ability to set different setbacks and lot-size standards based on the location of certain properties.

It is also important to note that the Town is not opposed to developing projects that are in keeping with the act's proposals. The Town created the Village Overlay Zone specifically to allow denser, smaller housing to accommodate the missing middle housing that this act seeks to address. This includes having no lot coverage and setbacks like those found in the act. But it is important that the Town has the ability to apply this overlay zone or other zoning tools in areas where these standards are most appropriate.

Townhouse by Right

Similar to our concerns above, creating a mandate to add townhouses in every zone limits the Town's ability to guide the development of its community in a holistic manner that accounts for the need not only for housing but also for other uses that work in tandem with housing, such as parkland. It imposes a one-size-fits-all approach to townhouse development. Once again, the Town is not opposed to this type of housing, as a townhouse project is underway in Poolesville Downtown, where it is appropriate and in keeping with the Town's long-term planning.

Lot coverage

The prohibition on lot coverage requirements also impacts the locality's ability to adapt to local conditions. Much of the soil in the area around Poolesville doesn't percolate, meaning that using lot coverage as a stormwater management tool is much more cost-effective and environmentally more sustainable for our area. Without this tool, the cost of stormwater management will work against the goals of this bill, which is to create more sustainable and affordable housing for seniors and young people.

Conclusion

The Goals of this legislation are admirable, but the approach the bill takes to achieve its goals is heavy-handed and top-down, ignoring the very real challenge municipalities face: creating standards that meet the local conditions of their communities rather than enforcing mandates. The state should work with municipalities to create a path forward that accounts for local concerns and conditions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Brown', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jim Brown
President, Poolesville Town Commissioners