

CDN SB829 FAVORABLE.pdf

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Position: FAV



TESTIMONY
SENATE BILL 829
Education, Energy & the Environment Committee
February 24, 2026
Position: FAVORABLE

Chair Korman and Members of Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee:

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland’s community development sector and serves nearly 200 member organizations. CDN—focuses on small affordable housing developers, housing counseling agencies and community-based non-profits across the state of Maryland. The mission of CDN is to promote, strengthen and advocate for the community development sector throughout Maryland’s urban, suburban and rural communities. CDN envisions a state in which all communities are thriving and where people of all incomes have abundant opportunities for themselves and their families. Our network is a state partner of the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

SB 829 - would allow more homes near shops and offices and create more homes that local workers can afford, plus increase residents’ access to amenities. Allowing for the repurposing abandoned office parks or underutilized malls to create inviting, connected neighborhoods.

The opportunity to replace underutilized spaces and places with vibrant communities is rich in urban, suburban and rural Maryland. Across the state, vacant office buildings and underutilized strip malls are no longer meeting the needs of the people and places. Removing barriers to redevelopment will help replace crumbling buildings with vibrant communities where people can live, work, and shop.

According to the updated 2025 Maryland Housing Needs Assessment, housing production must increase, in tandem with an upzoning of land in localities where housing is most desirable. The state’s most vulnerable will continue to be at risk of housing instability, highlighting the importance of no net loss of the existing supply.

We urge your favorable report for SENATE BILL 829

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director, Community Development Network of MD

Bring Back Main Street one-pager.pdf

Uploaded by: Dan Reed

Position: FAV



Support the Bring Back Main Street Act (SB 829/HB 1137)

[Maryland is short 150,000 homes](#). When there aren't enough homes to go around, tough competition [dramatically drives up housing costs](#). High housing costs push out longtime residents, meaning our state is losing talented workers and valued neighbors, according to a [recent study](#) by Comptroller Brooke Lierman. Recent polling underscores that:

- **Housing costs and inflation are Maryland voters' top two concerns.**
- **92% of Marylanders say the cost of renting or buying a home is a problem.**
- **80% of Marylanders support allowing more homes to be built in commercial areas**, like aging shopping centers or vacant office buildings.

Now, Maryland has an opportunity to build more homes—while also boosting local economies—by allowing vibrant “Main Street” neighborhoods where homes are built alongside shops, cafes, offices, and other businesses.

Many counties currently ban main streets. This prevents us from repurposing abandoned office parks or underutilized malls (think: Marley Station Mall in Anne Arundel County) to create inviting, connected neighborhoods (think: Pike & Rose in Montgomery County).

In 2026, the General Assembly should consider legislation to **Bring Back Main Street (SB 829/HB 1137)** to allow homes near offices, commercial spaces, and retail spaces. This legislation will:

- **Improve Marylanders' quality of life.** Today, many people who contribute to our communities—like teachers or retail workers—can't find homes they can afford in the places they serve. Allowing more homes near shops and offices will create more homes that local workers can afford, plus increase residents' access to amenities nearby. That means shorter commute times and less traffic congestion.
- **Open doors for small business entrepreneurs.** Mom-and-pop shops and cafes rely on consistent foot traffic from a local customer base in order to compete with Big Box chains. Integrating more homes near shops gives local entrepreneurs more opportunities to attract local customers, as well as recruit and retain local workers.
- **Replace underutilized spaces and places with vibrant communities.** Across the state, vacant office buildings and underutilized strip malls are no longer meeting the needs of the community. Removing barriers to redevelopment will help replace outdated, crumbling buildings with vibrant neighborhoods where people can live, work, and shop.

We urge your support of the Bring Back Main Street Act. For more information on this legislation, contact Dan Reed at dreed@ggwash.org.

GGWash Comments on SB 829, Bring Back Main Street.

Uploaded by: Dan Reed

Position: FAV



Chair Brian Feldman
and Members, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 24, 2026

Senate Bill 829 – Bring Back Main Street – Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Dan Reed and I serve as the Maryland Policy Director for Greater Greater Washington, a nonprofit that supports better housing, land use, and transportation policies throughout Greater Washington and beyond. **We're proud to support Senate Bill 829, the Bring Back Main Street Act, and thank Senator Waldstreicher for his leadership on this important issue.**

You've heard it so many times this session: we are in a housing crisis. Due to 20 years of underbuilding, home prices continue to rise, middle-class families are leaving the state, and both local and state governments are facing budget shortfalls. [Our poll](#), released earlier this month, found that housing costs, inflation, and taxes are Marylanders' top three concerns.

At the same time, [we have a glut of underused and vacant commercial space](#): aging shopping centers and office buildings that have reached the end of their useful life and don't meet the needs of modern businesses. This bill aims to solve both problems at once, by allowing homes to be built on commercially zoned land, something that 80% of Marylanders support—across county lines and party lines.

Many communities in Maryland currently allow housing in commercial zones (aka mixed-use zoning), while others place significant restrictions on it or limit it to certain areas. This bill would establish common development standards for housing on commercial land, which creates predictability for property owners, while giving local governments some flexibility for how to craft zoning rules that fit their needs. It will bring new life to commercial corridors while giving more Marylanders the chance to live close

The Washington, DC region is great  and it can be greater.



to the things that matter: daily needs, jobs, transportation, friends and loved ones, health care, faith communities, and so on.

This type of legislation has been embraced by states across the nation, most recently Virginia, where their “Housing Near Jobs” bill [has just passed the House and Senate](#). I hope we can do the same this year, and we ask for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Reed', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dan Reed
Maryland Policy Director

SB0829_DHCD_SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Jake Day

Position: FAV



WES MOORE
Governor
ARUNA MILLER
Lt. Governor
JACOB R. DAY
Secretary
JULIA GLANZ
Deputy Secretary

DATE: February 24, 2026

BILL NO: Senate Bill 829

TITLE: Land Use - Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments - Authorization (Bring Back Main Street Act)

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Letter of Support

Description of Bill:

The Bring Back Main Act requires counties with a population greater than 150,000 to allow multifamily and mixed use developments on commercial or recreational zoned land that is served by water and sewer. These projects would be approved administratively without requiring a public hearing or any other zoning actions. The bill also limits certain local zoning restrictions that could impede development, including density limits, setback requirements, and minimum off street parking mandates. It further restricts private homeowners' associations from imposing unreasonable rules that increase the cost of developments, except in the case of designated historic properties.

Background and Analysis:

Maryland continues to face challenges in expanding housing supplies, particularly in growing counties where regulatory and zoning barriers can slow the development of multifamily and mixed-use housing. Under current law, these barriers make it difficult to reuse underutilized commercial or recreational land, limiting housing options and slowing neighborhood revitalization, which constrains economic growth.

SB 829 encourages the development of multifamily and mixed-use housing by advancing approvals and reducing unnecessary restrictions. By making it easier to convert underused properties into residential and mixed spaces, the bill supports increased housing supply in the state. At the same time, counties will be able to retain the ability to regulate site design and require on site parking which ensures that developments remain compatible with local planning priorities.

Additionally, the bill limits unreasonable restrictions from private covenants and homeowners' associations that could potentially block development, while protecting designated historic properties. SB 289 represents an important tool for increasing housing opportunities, supporting mixed use development, and fostering stronger, and more resilient communities across Maryland.

DHCD Position

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 829.



CHC_FAV_SB829.pdf

Uploaded by: Jessamine Duvall

Position: FAV



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 829
Land Use – Multifamily Developments and Mixed–Use Developments – Authorization
(Bring Back Main Street Act)

Before the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 24, 2026

Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jessamine Duvall, and I am the Executive Director of Columbia Housing Center, a nonprofit organization based in Howard County that works to expand access to safe, stable, and affordable housing through direct assistance, education, and policy advocacy. I respectfully submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 829.

Maryland is facing a persistent housing shortage that is driving up costs and limiting access to opportunity across our counties. In high-demand jurisdictions, zoning restrictions continue to limit the development of multifamily housing—even on parcels already served by water and sewer infrastructure and located in commercial or recreational zones. SB 829 addresses this disconnect by allowing multifamily and mixed-use developments as permitted uses on appropriate parcels in larger counties, while preserving local authority over siting and design.

I want to emphasize that this bill does not eliminate local planning authority. Counties retain the ability to regulate site design, require on-site parking, and dedicate a portion of floor space to retail uses where appropriate. This bill does exactly what Maryland needs right now—it removes unnecessary barriers that delay or prevent housing production—particularly in areas already suitable for development.

By allowing housing in commercially zoned areas that are currently underutilized, the bill supports smart growth principles, strengthens local economies, and advances environmental sustainability goals. Locating housing near services, employment centers, and infrastructure reduces sprawl, shortens commutes, and makes more efficient use of existing public investments.

From our work assisting families across Howard County, we see daily the consequences of constrained housing supply: households competing for too few units, rising rents, and increasing instability. Expanding opportunities for multifamily and mixed-use housing in appropriate locations is an easy and direct way for the State to alleviate these pressures.

SB 829 also appropriately balances affordability requirements by ensuring counties cannot impose inclusionary mandates beyond what is already required in residential zones, while preserving the ability to regulate consistent with existing policy. This provides predictability to developers and encourages production, which is essential to long-term affordability.

At a time when many Marylanders are struggling to remain in the communities where they work and raise their families and young people are leaving the state due to lack of housing affordability, we must modernize land use policies to reflect current housing realities. SB 829 is a thoughtful step toward aligning zoning with infrastructure, market demand, and statewide housing goals.

For these reasons, Columbia Housing Center respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 829.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lambert", written in a cursive style.

Executive Director
Columbia Housing Center

SB0829 - FAV - Montgomery County Women's Democrati

Uploaded by: Kate Stein

Position: FAV



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

**Senate Bill 829 - Land Use - Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments –
Authorization (Bring Back Main Street Act)
Education, Energy, and the Environment - February 24, 2026**

SUPPORT

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2026 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic clubs in our county, with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of SB 829. One of WDC's core objectives is to advance legislation that effectively serves women and their families. Expanded housing opportunities and lower housing costs are essential to achieving these goals.

The bill enables apartments, condominiums and multi-unit housing that are currently restricted by zoning. SB0829 breaks down barriers to building housing, especially near jobs and transportation. It is aimed at expanding housing opportunities and lowering costs. It will increase opportunities for women to obtain homes accessible to transportation and their jobs, where such opportunities currently are limited.

The bill directly addresses Maryland's well-documented housing shortage. Maryland's Comptroller Brooke Lierman estimates that the state is currently short about 100,000 housing units and will need roughly 590,000 new units by 2045 to meet demand and projected growth. For years, restrictive zoning has constrained housing construction across the state. By increasing zoning flexibility, the bill would enable faster housing production, and a greater housing supply is one of the most effective ways to stabilize prices. WDC believes that lower rents and home prices will expand housing options for women and workforce families.

SB0829 has many advantages for Maryland residents. Residents can live closer to jobs, shopping and transportation, reducing reliance on long car commutes and providing environmental benefits. WDC believes that SB0829 is the right way to increase housing options, availability and affordability for Maryland residents.

We ask for your support for SB 829 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Respectfully,

Cynthia Rubenstein
WDC President

Janet Frank
WDC The Basics Committee

Kate Stein
WDC Advocacy Chair

SB0829_FAV_Maryland Just Power Alliance.pdf

Uploaded by: Katie Wenger

Position: FAV



Support the Bring Back Main Street Act (SB829)

Dear Members of the Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee:

We, the [Maryland Just Power Alliance](#) (ACT, AIM, and PATH), a multi-racial, multi-faith, nonpartisan community power organization representing tens of thousands of Maryland residents. We organize people in congregations, schools, and neighborhoods to make Maryland a better place to live and thrive.

In our [listening sessions last fall with over 3,000 Maryland residents](#), we asked them, “What is keeping you and your family from thriving?” The high cost of housing was one of the top concerns people raised.

We support this bill because we need to make the state of Maryland a place where quality, stable homes that people can afford are widely available. Right now, the cost of housing is rising out of reach for so many people because of our enormous housing shortage.

The Bring Back Main Street bill will create new housing opportunities by allowing mixed-use development (housing mixed in with stores and businesses) to be built in commercial areas, with a focus on underused strip malls and office buildings.

Having more housing options will enable more seniors, young adults, and families to afford to live independently, and help working people—our teachers, firefighters, police officers, hospital employees and more—afford to live where they work.

Mixed-use redevelopment also gives people the chance to live near the places they need to go—jobs, stores, et cetera—without having to drive long distances. Especially when located near transit, this redevelopment also helps our environment and reduces pollution.

Rev. Michael Vanacore, pastor of Pilgrim United Church of Christ in Wheaton, shares: “We need action, and we need it today, to make homes affordable and accessible in our communities. If we don’t, I am afraid I will not have a house, a church, or a community to come home to for much longer.”

We are counting on you to pass a clean version of this bill out of your committee. Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

The Maryland Just Power Alliance

Testimony in favor of Bring Back Main Street 2026

Uploaded by: Kelli Rives

Position: FAV



Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony: SB 0829 Land Use - Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments - Authorization (Bring Back Main Street Act)

Organization: Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County, MD

Submitting: Laura Salganik, Chair

Position: FAVORABLE

Hearing Date: February 24, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County, we submit testimony in strong support of the Bring Back Main Street Act. This legislation provides a practical approach to addressing Maryland’s housing shortage while revitalizing underused commercial properties.

The Bring Back Main Street Act requires certain counties, including Howard County, to allow multifamily and mixed-use developments as a permitted use on commercially zoned parcels, particularly vacant or underutilized strip malls. By allowing these projects to move forward without lengthy zoning approvals—so long as they meet standard site plan requirements and are served by existing water and sewer infrastructure—the bill removes unnecessary barriers to housing production and reduces regulatory costs.

These reforms are essential. Maryland currently faces a housing shortage of approximately 96,000 units, a gap that will continue to grow without meaningful action to streamline development. Repurposing existing commercial sites allows communities to add housing more quickly and efficiently while making better use of existing infrastructure.

Mixed-use developments also help create more walkable, connected neighborhoods that serve residents across generations, including young professionals and seniors who wish to age in place near services and amenities.

We respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0829.

SB 829 - Main Street - FAV - REALTORS.pdf

Uploaded by: Lisa May

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 829 - Land Use - Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments - Authorization (Bring Back Main Street Act)

Position: Support

Maryland REALTORS® strongly supports SB 829, the Bring Back Main Street Act. This is common-sense legislation that allows housing in places where infrastructure already exists and where it makes economic and community sense to grow.

By permitting multifamily and mixed-use development on commercially and recreationally zoned properties that are already served by water and sewer, SB 829 ensures that new housing can be built efficiently without expanding sprawl or overburdening undeveloped areas. It aligns growth with existing infrastructure and reflects what the majority of Maryland residents recognize as a necessary solution to the State's housing crisis: building more homes in smart, sustainable locations.

Co-locating housing and commercial uses strengthens communities. Mixed-use development creates more walkable neighborhoods where residents can easily access goods, services, and employment. At the same time, local businesses benefit from a built-in customer base, supporting vibrant main streets and long-term economic success. Allowing these developments as permitted uses reduces unnecessary delays and uncertainty while preserving reasonable local authority over site design and parking.

Maryland faces a significant housing shortage that is driving up costs for families and limiting economic growth and opportunity. SB 829 provides a practical, balanced approach to increasing housing supply, revitalizing commercial corridors, and making better use of existing infrastructure.

For these reasons, Maryland REALTORS® urges a favorable report on SB 829.

**For more information contact
lisa.may@mdrealtor.org or christa.mcgee@mdrealtor.org**

MBIA Letter of Support SB 829.pdf

Uploaded by: Lori Graf

Position: FAV

February 20th, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: MBIA Letter of Support SB 829 Land Use - Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments - Authorization (Bring Back Main Street Act)

Dear Chair Feldman,

The Maryland Building Industry Association, representing 100,000 employees of the building industry across the State of Maryland, appreciates the opportunity to participate in the discussion surrounding **SB 829 Land Use - Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments - Authorization (Bring Back Main Street Act)**.

This bill requires counties over 150,000 residents and Baltimore City to allow multifamily and mixed-use developments as a permitted use on commercially or recreationally zoned properties that are served by water and sewer. It also establishes limits on local zoning and private land-use restrictions. MBIA is in full support of this bill, as it will create more opportunities to build more housing. According to a recent study by Comptroller Brooke Lierman, Maryland is short 150,000 homes, and high housing costs are pushing out longtime residents to neighboring states like Pennsylvania and Virginia. When there aren't enough homes to meet demand, tough competition dramatically drives up housing costs and causes our state to lose talented workers and valued neighbors.

SB 829 addresses our housing crisis by allowing multifamily and mixed-use developments by right on appropriately located parcels that already have access to water and sewer infrastructure. This type of development encourages vibrant "Main Street" neighborhoods. Many counties currently ban main streets. This prevents builders from repurposing abandoned office parks or underutilized malls (such as Marley Station Mall in Anne Arundel County or Security Square Mall in Baltimore County) to create inviting, connected neighborhoods. 80% of Marylanders support allowing more homes to be built in commercial areas, like aging shopping centers or vacant office buildings, according to Greater Greater Washington. Removing zoning barriers that prevent redevelopment will replace outdated, crumbling buildings with vibrant neighborhoods where people can live, work, and shop.

For these reasons, MBIA respectfully requests the Committee give this measure a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

For more information about this position, please contact Lori Graf at 410-800-7327 or lgraf@marylandbuilders.org.

cc: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

MMHA - 2026 - SB829 - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Matthew Pipkin

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 829

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Bill: Senate Bill 829 - Land Use - Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments - Authorization (Bring Back Main Street Act)

Date: February 24th, 2025

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA) is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members consist of owners and managers of more than 214,000 rental housing homes in over 1015 apartment communities. Our members house over 571,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA also represents over 270 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

Senate Bill 829 (“SB 829”) requires counties with populations over 150,000 to allow multifamily developments and mixed-use developments as a permitted use on certain parcels or lots. Additionally, SB 829 prohibits counties from imposing specific unreasonable or inconsistent requirements on these developments that do not exist for other residential zones in the county.

MMHA would like to commend the sponsor for bringing forth this commonsense legislation. As Maryland seeks to chip away at Maryland’s housing dearth of 96,000 units, developers and housing providers are far too often stymied at the local level by overburdensome regulations when seeking to either develop or expand upon existing properties. Some of these local and municipal regulations, such as mandated off-street parking requirements and required nonpublic open space easements, are arbitrary and appear reactionary from localities who are seeking to discourage higher density on these developments.

Without the State’s intervention on feckless local housing policies, such as rent control, our housing affordability crisis will only compound and be prolonged for years to come. SB829 is a crucial step towards the State leading the way on housing policy.

For those reasons, MMHA would ask for a favorable report to SB829.

Please contact Matthew Pipkin, Jr. at (443) 995-4342 or mpipkin@mmhaonline.org with any questions.

MGA 2026 Testimony Bill SB0829 (Bring Back Main St

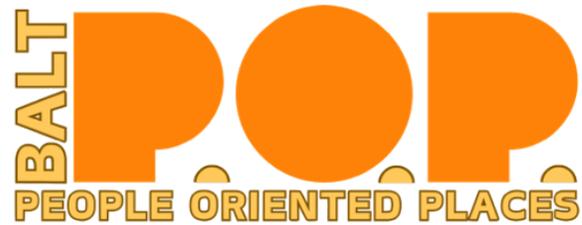
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Position: FWA

Bill: SB0829

Bill Title: Land Use - Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments - Authorization (Bring Back Main Street Act)

Position: **Favorable with Amendments**



Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

As a group which believes that encouraging traditional, higher-density development patterns in Maryland will deliver us appealing, affordable, fiscally-sustainable communities, we support SB0829.

For centuries of human development, there was no concept of mixed-use development. It was simply development. It's only been for the past 100 years, with the U.S. Supreme Court's affirmation that exclusionary zoning is legal, that we've needed to label it.

The bones of all of our traditional main streets formed before the advent of exclusionary zoning. Examples in Baltimore City may be found in Federal Hill, Fell's Point, Hamilton-Lauraville, Highlandtown, Pennsylvania Ave, Pigtown, Belair-Edison, and Waverly. What makes these main streets unique is their dynamic flexibility.

In contrast, exclusionary zoning is designed to bring stasis. We are now seeing the fragility of that stasis. The real estate market is changing. Physical office space is hemorrhaging tenants. The market for retail space is weak. In contrast, the unsatisfied demand for residential housing is at crisis levels. Our system of exclusionary zoning forbids the dynamic flexibility necessary to adapt to these broad market shifts.

While exclusionary zoning is relatively new, it's now been entrenched long enough that, for everybody alive today, it's the only development model we've ever known. So, when a developer proposes to rezone their (possibly fallow) commercial property to allow residential housing, the surrounding community rises up in outrage. Few elected officials or developers have the stomach or resources to fight against such resistance. And so, parochialism wins and our communities remain locked in self-destructive stasis.

Allowing for mixed-use development is a critical tool for moving beyond that stasis. Mixed-use development is adaptive, flexible, and resilient. It only makes sense that housing density should increase as it nears commercial areas. The businesses gain a ready supply of customers and workers within easy walking distance. Those businesses then become less dependent on customers driving in from outside of the neighborhood, which reduces traffic and congestion on our roadways. The businesses can then (when allowed) pull back on the amount of expensive

and wasteful parking they provide, which allows for that space to be put into more productive use. The tax base strengthens and grows, yielding the resources necessary for upgrading and expanding the nearby facilities and infrastructure, if needed. A virtuous and sustainable cycle of development results.

With our support for this bill firmly established, in the interests of dynamic flexibility, we would like to see some small changes made to it.

- Nonresidential uses should not be limited to the first floor of buildings. Let's move beyond the vision of monolithic shopping centers and buildings the size of city blocks. Mixed-use could easily mean a three-story rowhouse filled with mostly commercial space next to a three-story rowhouse filled with mostly residential space.
- The minimum number of dwelling units should be lowered - possibly to three or four. Again, let's move beyond the vision of monolithic shopping centers and buildings the size of city blocks.
- Remove all government-imposed parking requirements. Parking mandates force communities to be automobile-oriented and disallow them to be walkable. Parking lots and parking garages are unpleasant to walk, bike, and roll past. They force "dead" space into the built environment that lengthens walking and biking times, making these modes of travel less convenient and appealing. Automobile-oriented development caps the economic potential of a place. You can only fit so many automobiles in one place and they don't bring dynamism to a place - people do.

We hope the committee finds these points helpful and convincing and we urge its members to **vote in favor of SB0829, with our suggested amendments**. Thank you for your efforts and the opportunity for us to testify on this legislation.

[BaltPOP - Baltimoreans for People-Oriented Places](#)

SB0829-EEE_MACo_OPP.pdf

Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko

Position: UNF



Senate Bill 829

*Land Use - Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments - Authorization
(Bring Back Main Street Act)*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: February 24, 2026

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 829. As drafted, the bill would override county adequate public facilities ordinances and other growth management tools by effectively requiring that any commercial or recreational parcel served by public water and sewer—regardless of available system capacity—be opened to multifamily or mixed-use development at the county’s highest allowable densities. In doing so, SB 829 displaces the range of factors jurisdictions are expected to weigh when allocating density and would undercut the State-required comprehensive planning framework, which is designed to balance infrastructure realities, environmental constraints, local priorities, and meaningful community input.

For the past three years, Maryland’s counties and the General Assembly have shared a clear priority: expanding the supply of affordable housing. That commitment is reflected in major recent actions, including the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024 (HB 538/SB 484) and legislation authorizing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) statewide in 2025 (HB 1466/SB 891). MACo played a pivotal role in advancing these—and many other—housing measures during this period. That work culminated in MACo’s 2026 legislative initiative bill, the Building Affordably in My Back Yard (BAMBY) Act, a county-backed comprehensive and pragmatic path forward to meet the current moment. Counties welcome tools to help advance housing at all levels, where it fits within their infrastructure capacity.

A central focus for the Administration, local governments, and the public has been assessing how current systems function and where processes can be improved. While SB 829 appears intended to align with that objective, it falls short of a well-tailored response to Maryland’s current needs and would create significant implementation challenges.

Key county concerns include:

Erosion of Adequate Public Facilities Safeguards

Counties are responsible for planning, financing, and operating core public services and infrastructure—schools, transportation networks, water and wastewater systems, and emergency

response, among others. Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances (APFOs) are a primary tool to ensure development can proceed in a way that does not outpace the capacity of those systems. *SB 829 would weaken or bypass these safeguards by requiring approvals regardless of capacity, increasing the risk of overcrowded schools, strained utilities, traffic impacts, and diminished service levels.*

Higher Density Without Due Consideration

Under State law, counties must make density decisions by weighing multiple considerations, including infrastructure capacity, geography, environmental conditions, and community input. By mandating that eligibility is triggered simply by the presence of water and sewer service—without regard to system capacity or other local planning factors—*SB 829 would invite significant unintended consequences, including to public health and safety, and reduce a county's ability to manage growth responsibly.*

Blanket Inclusion of Commercial and Recreational Parcels

Counties already use mixed-use zoning to integrate housing and commercial activity where it advances local plans and community needs. SB 829's across-the-board inclusion of all commercial and recreational parcels is problematic because it treats very different land types as interchangeable redevelopment sites. Commercial areas can be critical employment and small business hubs that rely on predictable zoning and site standards, while recreational parcels often reflect long-term public investments in parks, open space, and community amenities that are difficult—if not impossible—to replace once converted. These tradeoffs are typically resolved through comprehensive planning and case-by-case review, not a statewide by-right entitlement. *SB 829 would apply one-size-fits-all principles to very different land parcels, that have unique needs and capacities, which are best managed at the local level.*

Preemption of Local Affordability Tools

Capping local affordability requirements for these projects would strip counties of key market tools used to address a persistent market failure: absent targeted requirements and incentives, the private market routinely under-produces housing affordable to low- and moderate-income households. Counties frequently pair zoning flexibility or added density with inclusionary requirements and local subsidies—such as housing trust fund dollars, fee waivers, expedited review, public land dispositions, infrastructure participation, and PILOT arrangements—to make deeper affordability feasible. *By limiting what counties can require in exchange for these public investments, SB 829 would undercut local anti-displacement strategies and reduce the affordability outcomes counties are actively trying to achieve.*

Parking Preemption and Local Impacts

Parking demand is highly site-specific and is typically calibrated to local transit service, walkability, existing curb capacity, neighborhood spillover, and public safety needs. *SB 829's broad limits on minimum off-street parking requirements would shift impacts from private sites onto public streets, increasing congestion and enforcement burdens and potentially undermining access for residents,*

customers, employees, and people with disabilities—particularly in communities outside high-frequency transit corridors.

Preemption of Site Standards

Sweeping limits to basic site standards—lot size and coverage, setbacks, buffering/screening, and open space—are concerning because these are the core guardrails counties use to match development to real-world conditions. They are tied to stormwater and flooding risk, utility placement and easements, emergency access, pedestrian safety, and transitions to nearby neighborhoods. *By restricting local discretion over these baseline requirements, SB 829 would leave counties with fewer tools to prevent problems that are known to occur.*

County-Only Application

Limiting the bill’s mandate to counties targets only part of Maryland’s development ecosystem. Much of the State’s existing high-density housing stock—and many of the most viable near-term opportunities for additional density—are located in municipalities with established main streets, transit nodes, and street grids specifically designed to support mixed-use growth. *By imposing sweeping preemption on counties while excluding most municipal zoning regimes, SB 829 creates an uneven framework and candidly misses many of the main areas eligible for infill development.* Indeed, the potential to draw development *away* from “Main Street” downtown belies the very title of the bill.

Counties remain committed to partnering with the State to address Maryland’s housing needs in a pragmatic and balanced manner. As drafted, SB 829 would upend long-standing smart growth principles and well-considered local planning processes while creating significant operational and fiscal challenges for local governments. For these reasons, MACo respectfully urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on SB 829.

Arundel Rivers Testimony UNFAV Main Street SB829.p

Uploaded by: Elle Bassett

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Testimony in OPPOSITION of Senate Bill 829 – Land Use – Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments – Authorization (Bring Back Main Street Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment
February 24, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **OPPOSITION OF SB829**, on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Deeply rooted in the South, West, and Rhode Rivers, Arundel Rivers Federation heals and protects our waterways and champions clean water across Maryland. Our vision is healthy waterways for all, and we achieve our mission through restoration, education and outreach, and Riverkeeper programs. Arundel Rivers recognizes that clean water policy begins with land use policy, and how we choose to develop and conserve our lands has lasting impacts to our environment and the Chesapeake Bay.

While Arundel Rivers strongly supports the underlying goal of increasing affordable housing supply across the State of Maryland, SB0829, as introduced, makes significant changes to land use policy that could inadvertently incentivize the kind of sprawling development of rural and natural landscapes that we have long known is harmful to our environment, our land conservation goals, our environmental justice goals, and our Chesapeake Bay restoration goals. We have the following significant concerns with the bill, as introduced:

Concern 1: Building on Land Zoned for Recreation

The bill requires, rather than encourages, counties to alter their land use ordinances and development regulations to allow multifamily or mixed-use development on any parcel of land **zoned for recreational** (or commercial) **uses** that is currently served by a public or private water and sewer system. Multiple counties across the state have zones to set aside land for recreational uses. Such zones were never intended to accommodate the kind of infrastructure needed to accept large development projects. Our own Anne Arundel County has an “Open Space” zone that is used to designate natural areas and public and privately-owned parklands that are intended to be protected from disturbance and instead used for passive or active recreation. Many of our “open space” acres across the county are located in rural areas far from existing infrastructure. Efforts to deliver more housing across the state should not target public and privately owned natural areas and parkland for high-density residential development.

Concern 2: Building on Lots with Private Water and Sewer Service

As mentioned above, the bill requires, rather than encourages, counties to alter their land use ordinances and development regulations to allow multifamily or mixed-use development on any parcel of land zoned for recreational (or commercial) uses that is currently served by a public **or private water and sewer system**. While we could not locate legal definitions in Maryland Code for a private water or private sewer system, it would appear that individual wells and individual onsite wastewater disposal systems (septic systems) could fall under these definitions. If we are correct in this assessment, then this bill incentivizes high-density development on lots with wells and septic systems. Septic systems produce far more nutrient pollution than publicly owned wastewater treatment plants, and Arundel Rivers does not support further expansion of septic systems to enable high-density development projects. **Efforts to deliver more housing across the state should not target areas for growth that lack the adequate infrastructure needed to accommodate high-density development projects.**

Concern 3: Future Environmental Injustices for Residents

When large developments are built far away from high-functioning public infrastructure, we often see environmental injustices arise. Within Anne Arundel County, residents of multiple mobile home communities are now facing environmental injustice issues caused by substandard or failing privately

owned water and wastewater treatment facilities. No resident should be burdened with subpar water or wastewater. **Efforts to deliver more housing across the state should not inadvertently create a situation where such environmental injustices arise in the future.**

Concern 4: Expanding High-Density Zones Beyond Reasonable Carrying Capacity of the Land

The bill, as written, prohibits counties from **setting density limits on permitted developments that are lower than the highest allowable density in the county’s residential zones.** This provision would immediately “upzone” all acres that fall under the purview of this bill to the highest possible zoning density. For example, this would convert acres zoned for open space across Anne Arundel County to R22 – allowing 22 units per acre. Montgomery County could see acres upzoned to its R10 – allowing up to 100 units per acre in some cases. Baltimore County could see acres upzoned to High Density, allowing for 80 units per acre. Prince George’s County could see acres upzoned to R-H – allowing more than 48 units per acre. Each county regularly undergoes an exhaustive comprehensive rezoning effort that seeks to place some acres in the higher density categories, while keeping others out of the high-density categories. Such decisions consider the underlying land’s “carrying capacity,” or ability to accommodate this level of development. Only lands that are near robust publicly maintained infrastructure are able to accommodate such levels of development. **Efforts to deliver more housing across the state should not override detailed, local comprehensive planning efforts that are necessary to ensure development projects are built in the right places for the right reasons.**

Concern 5: Increasing Impervious Surfaces & Non-Point Source Pollution

The bill, as written, prohibits counties from setting **maximum lot coverage limits** for developments envisioned by the bill. These limits have long formed the foundation of protections for our environment and our communities from stormwater pollution and stormwater flooding. Moreover, counties already have increased maximum lot coverage limits in areas that are specifically zoned for multifamily or mixed-use developments. Stormwater runoff is one of the major non-point sources of pollution to the Bay. The recent 2023 Chesapeake Bay Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response (CESR) states that non-point source reductions are essential to meeting pollutant reduction goals. **Efforts to deliver more housing across the state should not waive impervious surface requirements and inadvertently increase stormwater pollution and flooding.**

Concern 6: Ambiguity in the Development Process

The bill, as written, prohibits counties from imposing “an unreasonable limitation” upon the applicant developing a parcel of land for residential or mixed-use development, and defines “unreasonable limitation” in part, as something that “significantly increases the cost of developing.” It’s entirely unclear how a county or court reviewing making or reviewing land use decisions would interpret this section. For example, would requiring a large stormwater pond on a multifamily development due to the increased impervious surfaces be determined to be an “unreasonable limitation?” Or, would requiring the applicant to pay a fee-in-lieu of replanting a forest that was removed to accommodate the project be determined to be an “unreasonable limitation?” **Efforts to deliver more housing across the state should provide clear, unambiguous guidance to locals and should not inadvertently discourage the kinds of improvements to development projects that deliver both environmental protections and higher quality of life outcomes for residents.**

For all the reasons stated above, we encourage an **UNFAVORABLE vote on SB0829.** Thank you for considering our testimony, and for your continued work toward our shared goal of delivering land use solutions that work for our communities, our lands, our rivers, and our Chesapeake Bay.

Sincerely,



Elle Bassett
South, West, and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation
elle@arundelrivers.org

SB829_UNFAV_HCGCassilly.pdf

Uploaded by: Robert Cassilly

Position: UNF

ROBERT G. CASSILLY
Harford County Executive



ROBERT S. McCORD
Director of Administration

February 20, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 829 – Land Use – Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments – Authorization (Bring Back Main Street Act)

Dear Chairman Feldman and Committee Members,

On behalf of the citizens of Harford County, I respectfully submit this letter in opposition to Senate Bill 829.

Harford County recognizes the importance of expanding housing opportunities and supporting vibrant mixed-use development where appropriate. However, SB 829 would override local zoning authority and require certain multifamily and mixed-use development types to be permitted by right in designated areas, regardless of local planning determinations or infrastructure capacity considerations.

Land use decisions are among the most fundamental responsibilities entrusted to local government. Harford County's Comprehensive Master Plan was developed through an extensive public process to carefully balance growth, infrastructure capacity, environmental stewardship, transportation planning, school capacity, and community character. Our zoning framework is intentionally aligned with that plan to ensure that development occurs in areas where public services and infrastructure can responsibly support additional demand.

By mandating that multifamily and mixed-use developments be permitted in specified areas, SB 829 undermines the integrity of locally adopted master plans and circumvents the deliberate planning process that ensures growth is sustainable. Housing density decisions must account for road capacity, school enrollment, water and sewer infrastructure, emergency services response times, and fiscal impacts on taxpayers. These are considerations best evaluated at the local level, where officials have direct knowledge of existing service capacity and long-term capital planning commitments.

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
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February 20, 2026
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While the goal of increasing housing supply is understandable, imposing uniform statewide mandates on zoning authority does not recognize the unique conditions and resource constraints facing individual counties. Growth without corresponding infrastructure readiness places pressure on existing residents and strains public resources that have been carefully allocated through long-term planning.

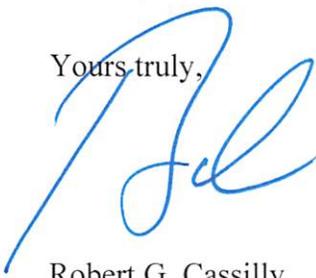
The primary challenge the counties face in supporting new housing developments are the limited resources for schools, roads, and public safety. Rather than helping counties to meet those needs, the state has consistently made it far more difficult for counties to grow. State contributions to school construction, maintenance, and operations continue to decline. Similarly, the state has greatly reduced funding for state highway capacity projects and sharply reduced the counties' share of Highway User Revenues that support county road projects. Public safety costs have spiked dramatically in response to the General Assembly's war on police that has made policing an undesirable profession. As the saying goes "follow the money." Support for quality housing cannot be properly achieved through unfunded mandates and power grabs.

Harford County remains committed to thoughtful housing development that aligns with our Comprehensive Master Plan and ensures that infrastructure keeps pace with growth. SB 829 disrupts that balance by substituting locally developed planning frameworks for state-directed land use policy.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 829.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Cassilly", is written over the typed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Robert G. Cassilly

SB829HB1137_Testimony_022026.pdf

Uploaded by: Gary Crockett

Position: INFO



TO: The Honorable Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Members, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
The Moore-Miller Administration

FROM: Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers

DATE: February 20, 2026

RE: Informational Testimony: Land use – Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Development (Bring Back Main Street Act) SB 829/HB 1137

Dear Chair Feldman:

Please accept this written informational testimony from Chevy Chase Village, a municipal corporation located in Montgomery County.

SB 829/HB 1137 would establish high density multifamily or mixed-use developments as a “permitted use” in any commercial or recreational zone in Counties with a population of 150,000 or greater.

The proposed legislation requires that in the named zones, multifamily and mixed-use projects must proceed “without requiring a public hearing” and without “any other discretionary zoning action,” which appears to prohibit Planning Board site plan review on major projects, leaving review and approval to the building permit agencies. Other material limitations in the bill significantly constrain development design standards including setbacks, lot coverage, and parking.

The bill also prohibits the County from imposing “density limits lower than the highest allowed in the County’s residential zones.” In other words, every property in every commercial zone would be allowed the maximum possible density by right.

The scope of this bill raises significant questions including:

1. Does stripping the County of the ability to limit density in commercial/recreational zones below “the highest allowed” risk future overburdened schools, roads, water/sewer infrastructure?
2. Will overriding density limits, which are mapped on a parcel-by-parcel basis after careful master planning analysis, compromise compatibility and other design considerations?
3. What process authorizes the County to limit the scale of a project where appropriate?
4. What opportunity would there be for public input on a major development project, including participation by municipal corporations?

We ask that the Committee seek answers to these questions as it considers this proposed legislation. Although we understand from the bill sponsor that this bill may not have been intended to apply to zones designated commercial/residential, we believe there is sufficient ambiguity to warrant clarification and appropriate amendments to clearly establish the intent.

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14113-Furth-MD-Housing-Testimony-v1.pdf

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Position: INFO

Allowing Housing Near Jobs Can Unlock Housing Options in Maryland

SALIM FURTH

Senior research fellow and director of the Urbanity Project, Mercatus Center at George Mason University

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

SB 829: Land Use—Multifamily Developments and Mixed-Use Developments—Authorization (Bring Back Main Street Act)

February 24, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify on SB 829, the Bring Back Main Street Act.

Two years ago, the Maryland Senate considered, and passed, a bill that attempted to enable housing growth on underused commercial land (SB 484, 2024). At the time, I cautioned a Senate committee that the bill was weakened by incorporating a false choice between abundance and affordability.¹ Although the bill allowed builders to provide homes on some commercial land, this option was, practically speaking, available only to projects already using dedicated affordable housing funding such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.

Today, the committee can advance SB 829, which would build on that small beginning by opening up more underutilized commercial land for housing and welcoming any builder to the opportunity. Homes built under SB 829 must still abide by affordable housing set-asides. But, as I noted in 2024, recently built apartments in Maryland are generally affordable to working-class households anyway. Increasing the supply of market-affordable apartments, condos, and—in other legislation—starter homes will allow Maryland and her counties to focus housing assistance on those with the lowest incomes.

Many Maryland cities and counties have already embraced, at least in concept, allowing homes on most commercially zoned land. Not all have done so, however, and in many cases there are additional barriers to housing that make it more difficult to build on those sites. And most jurisdictions simply have other priorities. Rather than proactively making land available for housing, they wait for a

¹ Salim Furth, “Market-Rate Rents Can Serve Moderate-Income Marylanders” (Testimony before the Maryland Senate Education, Business, and Administration Subcommittee, Mercatus Center at George Mason University, March 1, 2024).

developer proposal or a small area plan. For example, Howard County does not allow residential uses in its B-2 Office Commercial zone, which is frequently employed in areas directly abutting homes.

With colleagues, I have studied the adoption of residential-in-commercial-zone (RICZ) laws like SB 829. To date, 11 other states have such laws, which I summarize below.²

- Arizona: Allows residential redevelopment of commercial properties with high rates of vacancy.
- California: Allows RICZ subject to affordability and labor requirements.
- Florida: The Live Local Act allows RICZ up to the zoned limit in other residential zones.
- Hawaii: HB 2090 (2024) allows RICZ, but it may be limited to upper stories.
- Maine: LD 997 (2025) allows RICZ, but it may be limited to upper stories.
- Montana: Allows homes in RICZ with limits on local parking and height regulation.
- Nevada: AB 241 (2025) requires all localities to rezone for RICZ.
- New Hampshire: HB 631 (2025) allows RICZ, but it may be limited to upper stories.
- Oregon: HB 3395 (2023) allows deed-restricted affordable housing in commercial zones.
- Rhode Island: Statutes 45-24-33 and 37 each allow residential uses in some commercial zones, under differing parameters.
- Texas: SB 840 (2025) legalized RICZ in major cities under clear parameters.

From observing other RICZ laws, I have two technical critiques of SB 829:

- The bill sets a standard for allowed density based on the county's highest-density zone. This approach was pioneered in Florida, and it works there. However, Florida has a law against downzoning. Without that protection, counties would likely respond by reducing the density allowed in their densest zones, since that density would implicitly be the countywide density for residential projects in commercial zones. A better approach, which I laid out in a 2024 policy brief, is to set an absolute base standard and allow contextual deviations where the existing regulations or built pattern are more permissive.³
- The bill allows counties to require first-floor retail uses in a highly prescriptive way. That element should be either dropped or given more flexibility on the space that nonresidential uses will occupy and the nonresidential uses that a county can allow, beyond just retail.

Maryland's housing challenges did not emerge overnight, and they will not be solved by a single bill. But allowing residential uses in commercial districts statewide would be a meaningful step toward attainability, predictability, and market responsiveness.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

² Mercatus Center at George Mason University, "Housing Policies Highlight: Five Housing Supply Reforms Across the 50 States," 2026, <https://www.mercatus.org/housing-policies-highlight>.

³ Salim Furth and Eli Kahn, "Office Overhauls and 'God's Backyard': Reforms for Housing in Commercial Zones and Faith Land" (Mercatus Policy Brief, Mercatus Center at George Mason University, May 2024).