



Town of Easton

14 S. HARRISON STREET, EASTON, MARYLAND 21601

MEGAN JM COOK
MAYOR

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February 3, 2026

To: House Government, Labor and Elections Committee

Subject: RE: HB 0099 – Municipalities – Annexed Land – Land Use and Density
Written Testimony in Support (FAV)

Dear Honorable Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee:

On behalf of the Town of Easton, I am writing in strong support of HB 0099. The legislation removes significant barriers to smart growth by reforming the “express approval” power that currently allows County governments to freeze Municipal zoning for five years following an annexation.

We support HB 0099 for the following reasons:

1. Under current law (LG § 4-416) a County can deny a zoning waiver even if the annexation is entirely consistent with a Municipality’s State-mandated Municipal Growth Element. This allows a County to unilaterally override a Municipality’s comprehensive planning goals without meeting specific legal criteria. HB 0099 ensures growth is guided by deliberate Comprehensive Plan recommendations rather than reactive political pressure.
2. The 5-year freeze is a project killer. Developers cannot absorb the carrying costs of interest, property taxes, and insurance for 60 months before beginning the permit process. This effectively grants Counties a “veto” over Municipal development, stifling smart growth and affordable housing initiatives that the Town of Easton has deemed essential for our community.
3. If the 5-year hold isn’t waived, a developer may choose to simply build under County regulations. This often results in a lower density that is inappropriate for municipal growth areas. Critically, lower density development does not result in affordable units; because land and infrastructure costs are spread over fewer homes, the per-unit price inevitably rises. This prevents the Town from meeting its housing needs and removes incentives for properties to annex to utilize efficient Municipal services once it has been developed under County standards.

HB 0099 removes a significant hurdle to sustainable growth and restores the proper balance of planning authority. The Town of Easton respectfully requests your support on HB 0099.

Sincerely,

Megan JM Cook, Mayor