



6240 Old Dobbin Lane ■ Suite 110 ■ Columbia, MD 21045

June 14, 2019

Ms. Christiana Rigby
Chair, Howard County Council
George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

RE: CB 33 – 2019 – AN ACT amending the Howard County Code by specifying who may appeal Planning Board decisions; and generally relating to Planning Board decisions.

Dear Councilwoman Rigby:

The Howard County Chamber believes that public participation and communication to parties potentially affected by new development is critical to a fair and equitable development process. Both commercial and residential inhabitants deserve to have the opportunity to share their affirmations and reservations on new projects. This belief is epitomized in many of Howard County development processes as we often require more public input than our neighboring jurisdictions particularly when it pertains to Downtown Columbia and Village Center development.

It is in this context that we are troubled by the aforementioned proposed legislation. Those potentially aggrieved by a proposed development currently can share their opinions and have standing to appeal decisions to the Board of Appeals and the Courts. To expand this beyond those immediately affected will adversely impact the development process underway. To add additional appeals would lengthen an already arduous process, increase the financial burden on business, undoubtedly delay and potentially deter development that is sorely needed in certain parts of the county.

Moreover, this legislation would certainly slow down Downtown Columbia Development, which would negatively impact the fulfillment of the Downtown Columbia Master Plan, a critical component of Howard County's vision for fiscal health through increased net positive tax revenues. We need fiscally net positive development and business activity to fund our schools, our public safety, and the other services our County residents rely on. We might also see an immediate impact on village center redevelopment, which already has an extremely lengthy approval process.

Business and development rely on predictability as some projects are highly volatile and the slight deviation of plan and schedule derails the entire effort. The Chamber wholeheartedly believes in the public participation process. We also believe that while everyone should have the right for their voice to be heard, as they do today, the right to appeal decisions should be limited to those directly impacted, consistent with Maryland State law.

The Howard County Chamber thanks you for the opportunity to share our concerns on the proposed legislation. We would be more than happy to meet with you or members of the Council to discuss this matter further and to work collaboratively to develop mechanisms to remedy any deficiencies you see in our planning process.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leonardo McClarty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leonardo McClarty, CCE
President/CEO, Howard County Chamber

CC: Howard County Council
Howard County Executive
Howard County Chamber Board of Directors