



HCCA

Howard County Citizens Association

Since 1961...

The Voice Of The People of Howard County

Date: 18 September 2019

Subject: **HCCA Testimony for CR112-2019**

Good evening. I am JD Smith representing the Howard County Citizens Association, HCCA as a member of the Board.

It is true; the school system is segregated by socio-economic factors. It is also true that the country's long history of racism and "separate but equal" keeps many poor people, especially people of color, away from the greatest equalizer and source of prosperity, which is a good public education.

While many jurisdictions can attribute their primary source of segregation to this long history, Howard County can look to the long history of developer influence.

For decades, developer influence of Howard County's zoning and land-use laws have led to the concentration of poverty in certain regions of the county. These zoning regulations and agreements reached with developers have resulted in net lower number of affordable housing through alternative compliance to reduce the percentage of affordable homes, by charging so-called fees-in-lieu that have no market-basis, or by simply exempting large regions of the county from requiring any affordable housing- New Town, Turf Valley, Maple Lawn, Village Centers, Downtown Columbia, River Hill, either have received exemptions or do not require any affordable housing.

The county has a long history of passing favorable zoning and land-use laws to developers at the expense of the taxpayer. Free taxpayer dollars in the form of tax increment financing, below market school surcharge fees, density swaps in exchange for affordable housing, with no requirement to provide the affordable housing just like the downtown Columbia plan, numerous affordable housing exemptions and below market fees-in-lieu, the list goes on.

The cumulative effect of these actions has led to the status quo- the disparate statistics of poverty in certain schools. The Superintendent has released his proposal and we are confident the school system will develop a plan that will faithfully execute Policy 6010.

While the BoE and Superintendent are trying to do their job, we also ask the County Council and County Executive to try and do yours. Only you can address the root cause or in the next few years, we will face the same issues unless immediate action is taken to update development regulations that lead to the problem.

This is why we ask you to pass CB17 immediately to increase development wait times to seven years when schools are overcrowded. We also ask you to address the issue of

affordable housing. Remove all exemptions and require a minimum of 10 to 15% affordable housing in all zoning districts of the county. Increase the MIHU fees to market fees and allow them only in circumstances where the 15% threshold is met. Pass CB42 to increase the school surcharge fees to \$8 per square foot with no exemptions or grandfathering of projects.

Our suggestions would by all means be a major step in the right direction.

JD Smith
HCCA Board of Directors