

HCCA Testimony – Public hearing 01/19/2021

CB4-2021

The Howard County Citizens Association (HCCA) supports in part and opposes in part the provisions of CB4-2021.

The HCCA expresses support to the provision of CB4 that would require a fiscal impact analysis to be submitted prior to the introduction of each bill or legislation for consideration by the council. Introducing the fiscal impact analysis at the time of introduction would give more time for consideration by public. You may recall that the HCCA expressed serious concern about the current timing at the time it was proposed. We are gratified that this concern is addressed by the bill. Since it is not clear, whether fiscal impact analysis would be public at the time of introduction of bill, we would urge that it be clear.

We would like to point the council’s attention to lines 1 and 2 on page 3 of the bill. If the bill is passed, the sentence after the comma on line 1 might not be applicable anymore as it was applicable to the timing if the analysis was submitted the Thursday before the public hearing.

The HCCA does not support the change in the bill that allows the County Executive to get out of preparing a fiscal impact analysis under emergency conditions. The definition of “emergency” leaves a lot to the imagination and could be used as a loophole. For example, we are currently under a state of emergency. Does this mean the County Auditor or County Executive don’t have to provide this fiscal impact analysis?

The Administration's explanation says the intent is to "extend the exception afforded to the Auditor to the County Executive", but we disagree that analysis as the Auditor and the County Executive are subject to different accountability structures. The County Executive as a co-equal branch of government can chose to ignore the requirement without concern of accountability, especially if he or she can influence the Council Chair to allow this transgression.

So we request that the county council specify the categories of emergency under which the exceptions are allowed. A written documentation of this emergency with an explanation of how that emergency prevented the preparation of the analysis.

We also think it would serve transparency and accountability better if there is a stipulation that the bill will not be introduced without the fiscal analysis.

Hiruy Hadgu

HCCA Board of Directors