



## Testimony in Support of CB56-2021

Susan Garber, North Laurel

I'm honored to have been asked by the Howard County Citizens Association, The People's Voice, and the Savage Community Association to speak in support of CB56. You're well aware that I often come to 'speak for the trees'. But tonight, in addition to the 5000+ members of the organizations for whom I am testifying, I'm speaking for the welfare of the existing residents of Howard County..... and the rest of the human race.

Anyone who has watched the news lately is aware of life threatening heat waves, droughts, and horrific forest fires in the Western US—which effected our air quality here today. Devastating flooding at **inconceivable** levels today in China and last week in Germany, one of the richest countries in the world, (plus other surrounding countries in Eastern Europe) has caused us to monitor the death toll and to say prayers....prayers for those lost **and** prayers of thanks that it wasn't us losing family and friends and all we possess. Has witnessing these disasters on the media brought home that being rich, like many in Howard County won't save you, your family, or your home—whether a mansion or a subsidized apartment. Fingers are being pointed at manmade climate change as a major contributing factor to these deadly situations.

While Howard County **has** implemented several things to reduce our contribution to climate change, we continue to fall far short in one critical area-- protecting our mature trees. Trees contribute so much, not the least of which is the sequestering of carbon and production of the oxygen we can't live without. Their roots stabilize the soil and soak up run-off. They provide habitat to many species and their sheer existence in our parks and trails helped center us and support our mental health during this long pandemic.

We're thankful that Council Chair Walsh, who has consistently taken action to protect our dwindling forests--especially where steep slopes and storm water management issues prevail-- has now submitted CB56. We were frankly very disappointed that Council members Jones, Rigby and Yungmann voted against the Amendment to CB42-2021, introduced by Liz Walsh and supported by Deb Jung, which would have reduced the number of years before an initial report on the effectiveness of our new Forest Conservation bill.

How much additional forest loss will occur over a 7 year period? How much will the frequency and severity of flooding, extremes of heat and cold, forest fires, hurricanes, tornados, etc. increase over 7 years if Howard County doesn't do its part to make wise decisions about protecting this limited precious resources.

There's only a small percentage of land left for development in this county. Yet I suspect that most developers today simply regard trees as an inconvenience or nuisance. This is unlike when

lots Rouse was selling had signs indicating “Except for you, this tree is the most valuable thing on this lot.” Sadly, today’s developers see trees only as additional expense and additional limitations on layouts to achieve a desired number of units. To them, it appears trees are “a renewable resource”, so replacing for example one 50 year old tree with 2 trees only a few inches in diameter is a fair trade off. BUT NO. That couldn’t be further from the truth.

By all measurement, from shade and cooling produced, stabilization of soil, absorption of run-off, habitat provided to carbon sequestration and oxygen production—one would have to wait 30 to 50 years to gain back what has been lost by the destruction of that one mature tree. Which of you—or them—is willing to give up breathing for 30 -50 years while the world’s trees catch up???

We hope **all** Council members will demonstrate to their constituents their full commitment to equitable forest preservation. Show that you understand the wisdom behind clearly establishing the criteria for specimen trees. Show that you can grasp how a tree can itself be historic. Show you are aware of the critical need for a look-back to put an end to owners/developers shamelessly unethically removing trees just ahead of submitting plans to avoid the expenses and regulations in place. Show you care more for the welfare of your constituents and the planet, than for a developer friend or campaign contributor. We urge you to vote yes on CB 56.