



HCCA

Howard County Citizens Association

Since 1961... The Voice of the People of Howard County

Date: 17 March 2025

Subject: **HCCA Testimony for CB18-2025**

Good evening, Council Members:

My name is Ryan Powers and I am testifying tonight as the HCCA's newest Board Member.

We believe CB18 is serving us a turducken. This bill seems like an odd amalgamation of combining expanding access to existing affordability with extreme APFO exemption. We note that Councilwoman Rigby's social media ad doesn't make it clear this Bill includes an APFO exemption. It is surprising these two unrelated issues should be in the same Bill.

While we support the provisions for affordable disability income housing units, we would like a clean bill. By granting APFO exemptions and stymieing school impact fees, you will pile on to the burdens of already overcrowded schools. This is not an APFO exemption for one development like the County Council has voted for in the past: it is 6 different areas concentrated along the eastern edge of the County with who knows how many future developments? And this area gets a 30% density bonus on top of that. This can only lead to frequent redistricting farther away from local communities while also keeping kids in packed schools for years before the redistricting process is complete. This is such a wide-reaching exception that 14 schools will be affected. There is some overlap in boundaries, but Councilmember Rigby ten schools are in your district. Councilmember Jones has five, four for Councilmember Walsh. Councilmember Jung has a tiny piece of Reservoir. So, only Councilmember Yungmann is unscathed except-- how many years do you think it will be before parents in D5 are complaining about larger class sizes and less resources due to this legislation? Along the APFO exemption route, Bollman Bridge ES is predicted to be at 112.5% capacity, Hanover Hills ES 114%, Thomas Viaduct 118.1%, Patuxent Valley 118.4%. Councilwoman Rigby these schools with significant overcrowding are all in your district. High schools are better off in terms of space for now, but the Guilford High School boundary area is in four out of six of these TOD areas, in Districts 1, 2 and 3. Hammond High School gets hit twice in District 3. These schools are some of the most vulnerable: free and reduced meals percentages: 66.1, 48.4, 63.5, 46.9, 56.4 -- the numbers go on like that. The County needs time to balance growth with school needs--it shouldn't grant APFO exemptions here.

This bill is not a fulfillment of State Bill 538; that Bill didn't seek to just thwart APFO but required actual large numbers of affordable housing for easing it. Do you, our county leaders, want to make APFO into Swiss cheese by spot zoning TOD project favors? This was considered unacceptable for implementing safety issues. The County will soon hear recommendations from the APFO Review committee. Why preempt their hard work; choose instead to let that process play out. Instead of a bill coming before the Council now, which we believe hurts the school system and doesn't guarantee greater amounts of affordable housing get built, let more of our community enter the APFO conversation.

If the only possible thing the Council can do to provide more affordable housing is to attack the school system, you are an autoimmune disease attacking its own body. Give us real solutions instead of this: get rid of the fee-in-lieu so that people live in the very nice housing units that are being developed. Help finance housing projects from nonprofits that provide a path toward affordable home ownership. Don't continue to cater to developers while getting so little affordable housing in return; the County's value is worth more. We also believe the home buying tax exemptions for public service employees working for Howard County should be expanded.

Howard County needs great schools and affordable housing. Dropping school fees and taking local high-density projects out of APFO isn't it. Please vote "No" on this bill.

Thank you for your time,

Ryan Powers
HCCA Board Member
