



# HCCA

**Howard County Citizens Association**

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

Dear County Council Members,

My name is Ryan Powers from Glenwood, and I am speaking on behalf of the Howard County Citizens Association (HCCA). We are here asking that the County Council vote unfavorable on the APFO School Capacity Chart, CR113-2025.

Things need to be done differently in Howard County. For one, granting APFO exemptions like in CB18-2025 undermines the very purpose of having an APFO chart in the first place, which presumably is meant to guide smart growth and give time for the school system to plan for capacity changes without the use of frequent redistricting. Over 10% of the schools are currently undergoing redistricting in part due to past APFO exemptions granted in the Bryant Woods school attendance area. CB18 exemptions have taken Title 1 schools like Bollman Bridge from 114.8% in five years to 118.9%, and it now will be 20% higher in overcapacity to 141.4% in the next ten years. Frequent redistricting disrupts the communities you represent and harms student education

Second, the APFO school capacity chart projections only project the K-12 student population. However, the Blueprint mandates preK enrollment for underserved populations, and this is the fastest area of growth for our school system. The Blueprint is also failing in placement of preK students at private preschools. The result is that there will be more students in the buildings than are currently predicted. We are not criticizing the Office of School Planning in their projections. They do a great job projecting K-12 enrollment, but for various reasons preK need is not reflected in the APFO School Capacity Chart.

Finally, we'd like to take a moment to reflect on the APFO Review Committee's current recommendation to replace the school waiting bin with the Utilization Premium Payment System. It is clear from HoCo by Design that development in Howard County will be largely concentrated in downtown Columbia and along the Route 1 corridor. Choosing to institute a pay-to-play system that intentionally overcrowds schools and doesn't provide nearly enough money will only compress the capacity issues you see at specific schools, which again are schools that often have high rates of students experiencing poverty. The current APFO chart is used to smooth out development demand with public infrastructure. HoCo by Design did not anticipate replacing school wait times with this pay-to-play system and the Council should not adopt any plan that intentionally overcrowds the school system or leads to such frequent redistricting in which students' ability to learn will be harmed.

Please consider delaying the APFO chart until it more appropriately reflects preK need and capacity. We ask that you also clarify with DPZ and the Office of School Planning the effect CB18 will have on school capacity, as CB18's fiscal note listed multiple development projects

not currently in the school waiting bin which otherwise would have been without the APFO exemptions in the bill.

The APFO Review Committee will also be discussing CR113 during its meeting on June 25th. Without County Council intervention to properly account for preK need, we are concerned this creates a kind of circular firing squad where the APFO Review Committee makes recommendations to the County Council based on incomplete information, which was approved by the County Council in the first place. The County Council should fix the incomplete information in the school capacity chart so that inexact information is not propagated.

Thank you for your time

Ryan Powers, HCCA Board member