



HCCA

Howard County Citizens Association

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

Date: 20 January 2026

Subject: HCCA Testimony for CB7-2026

My name is Stu Kohn from Scaggsville representing the Howard County Citizens Association, HCCA as is President.

We appreciated you, Dr. Jones, stating your appreciation for our organization in October during public testimony. Yes - We are fortunate to live in a country where freedom of speech is a blessing and "Choose Civility" should be a priority. Keeping this in mind we have concerns about this proposed Bill as it is currently written.

Please refer to page 1, line 14. The words, "Hinder", "Obstruct", and or "Disrupt" needs to be clearly defined. Without such an amendment the Bill is too generic and will no doubt lead to interpretation on the part of anyone filing a complaint and the accused victim. It would be extremely helpful, Dr. Jones, to provide specific examples of what type of circumstances will constitute your colleagues or staff to be accused of such violations. For example, will any Council-member be forbidden to speak at a press-conference or testify at Board of Appeals hearings in support of their constituents' concerns?

Please refer to page 1, line 15 and 19 – reference the referral to Subsection (D) as we don't see it appearing in the Charter but has been corrected by an amendment.

Please refer to page 1, lines 23 thru 27, how were these specific Boards and Commissions determined?

Before approval we recommend the following questions be addressed and included as amendments to the Bill.

1. What is the rationale for excluding entities which are not defined in Lines 23 thru 27?
2. Is the Council to determine specific violations?
3. What are the penalties as it is not defined in the Bill?
4. Will Council-members be sanctioned and if so, what would this mean?
5. Will the Council by majority vote determine the outcome?
6. How will any accused violator receive Due Process?
7. How does the accused violator appeal their case?
8. Will there be a public hearing for the accused individual?

9. Will it be permissible for Council-members to testify on behalf of their constituents at BOA hearings and would this be considered undue pressure on the members of the board?
10. Will Council-members be permitted to speak for example at a Press-conference regarding a given case on behalf of their constituents?

Harry Truman in a speech to Congress in August 1950 stated, "Once a government is committed to the principle silencing the voice of the opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear."

In our opinion this Bill needs to be withdrawn or severely amended by adopting amendments regarding our suggested questions to make it relevant for all concerned parties. For clarity can you please provide specific instances where Council-members will be prohibited?

Stu Kohn
HCCA President