HCCA Howard County Citizens Association

Since 1961… The Voice of the People of Howard County

Date: 19 October 202
Subject: HCCA Testimony for CB69-2026

I am Stu Kohn from Scaggsville testifying on behalf of the Howard County Citizens Association, HCCA as its President. We are in **FAVOR** of CB69-2026. Thank you, Council Member, Jung for introducing the Bill and only hope your colleagues will unanimously vote in **FAVOR** especially if you believe in the voices of your constituents.

Tonight many of us are missing the TV program " The Voice." The 136,649 or 85% who voted in **FAVOR** of the referendum are simply looking to ensure our voices will always be fully heard, and all applicable relevant information is readily available for the Inspector General (IG) to thoroughly investigate all cases. The IG Office is to provide constituents with a voice, and you rightfully praised the establishment of the Office of the IG by approving CR107-24.

The referendum was clear and concise especially when it stated in part, "**The office would do its work without interference from the County Executive and County Council."** This is what we voted on and expected transparency and accountability which is paramount to the success of the Office of the IG.

The following are statements from our elected officials:

County Executive Calvin Ball - "We commend the Howard County Council for unanimously passing Council Bill 61, which will create the framework for the forthcoming Office of the Inspector General. I am pleased to see a bi-partisan outcome which included engagement from across Howard County government and our community. During the summer when the County Council began deliberating the establishment of the OIG, I supported a fair and collaborative approach. This inclusive and constructive process reflects our shared goals of ensuring transparency and good government."

Dr. Jones - "I am extremely pleased that all five Council members have come together to support a Charter Amendment and that Council member Liz Walsh helped pave the way with her introduction of CB47-2024 and CB48-2024."

Deb Jung - "With this Charter Amendment, the Council will have the flexibility to create an Inspector General Office that will be independent, be fully funded, and have access to outside counsel if need be."

Christina Rigby - “The creation of the Office of Inspector General responds to the loss of robust local investigative journalism and ensures that we maintain and build upon the trust between the people we serve and Howard County Government.”

Liz Walsh - “I am delighted that overwhelming public support demonstrated earlier this month for District 1’s legislation to establish an Office of the Inspector General — now — has prompted this unanimously supported Charter Amendment to do the same.”

David Yungmann - “I appreciate the collaboration with my colleagues to reach consensus on this important effort. We should use this opportunity to improve government accountability by creating an independent, bipartisan Inspector General.”

The establishment of the Office of the IG is in our opinion the best piece of legislation you approved during your years in office. Thank you! Now it’s your obligation to ensure the IG is in no way limited in any investigation. We didn’t vote for any hindrance or unwanted interference!

When referring to the Bill - page 1, lines 21 to 23 it reads, “Custodian of Records. Pursuant to 4-101(D) (2) of the general provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the Inspector General is authorized to have physical custody and control of Howard County Government Public Records.” This is what we all expected when the Office of the IG was established!

We heard in your legislative session the concern the Bill may not have legal sufficiency. Would someone please tell us why because if this were true why is the public testifying on this Bill?

We do suggest you consider specifying if there are any exceptions regarding “Public Records” whereby the IG would not be permitted to have access.

Your unanimous **APPROVAL** of CB69-2026 which should be a no brainer is imperative! There should be no excuses! Howard County needs to be the leader now and the future! We can’t wait for the State! Please allow Ms. Kelly Madigan to do the job she was hired to do!

Thank you,

Stu Kohn
HCCA President

The wording of the Referendum:

"Amending the County Charter to create an independent Office of Inspector General to provide increased accountability and oversight of county government and county funded organizations. The Inspector General would investigate fraud, waste and abuse, and identify ways to promote efficiency, accountability, compliance and integrity. **The office would do its work without interference from the County Executive and County Council.** The office could hire legal, financial and technical advisors as needed. The Executive's proposed budget would have to include the funding requested by the Inspector General, and the Executive could not reorganize the office. The County Council would pass a law to specify the details of the office, including the appointment, removal and oversight of the Inspector General. The law may also provide for the use of a Council appointed board."