

**2/13/20**

**HB481 – HEARING, Thursday, 1:00**

**Environment and Transportation Committee**

From: Laura Graham, Linthicum, tel. 410-691-6328

We Buy Houses, Powerwashing, Granite Countertops, New Homes, Driver's Ed School, SAT Prep, Medical Marijuana, Sports Camps, I Buy Trucks, Massage, Roofing, Ryan Homes, WindowNation, Tax Prep, Lennar Homes, College Hunks movers.....the list goes on.

You have seen this litter along our state roadways, every day, every week, every year – and every single one of them is illegal. Snipes signs, bandit signs – there is no good word for this enforcement avoidance scheme. The signs are zip-tied to traffic signs, nailed to trees and utility poles, staked in medians, at corners and along the Right-of-Way. Some of them blow off and litter the shoulders, others block the line-of sight for drivers pulling out of shopping plazas and streets.

State law says that NO signs may be placed in state Right-of-Way – period. Not even realty or home builder directional signs are permitted in state right-of-way. Some counties allow weekend directional signs on COUNTY roads, but the state does NOT by law permit these on state roads. Yet, at this moment thousands are littering our state roadways.

And that is what they are: litter. Litter on a stick. As much a part of our littered roadways as bags, bottles, packaging, and other trash.

But – these illegal signs are worse because they are attached to traffic signage, and designed to distract the driver from the traffic sign to the business advertisement.

Our roadways are not business bulletin boards. Businesses have numerous other ways to reach potential customers than to litter state roadways, and stiff the taxpayers for free use of space, and the cost of periodic removal - costing Maryland taxpayers around \$3 million per year in labor.

Since this is by definition, plain and simple, litter, the sign placement contractors and the businesses that pay them to post their signs, should be held liable for the standard No Littering fine: \$1,000 per sign. Unlike other trash, this kind of litter has contact information – a tel. number - to assess and collect the \$1,000 fine. The revenue will be significant!

We have laws to keep our roadways uncluttered – but the laws have no teeth. **HB481 has \$1,000 of teeth per sign.** This law is a no brainer: hike the penalty to \$1,000 and enforce the code. Then, this part of our litter problem will be greatly diminished.

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