

Testimony of  
JOHN R. PALIGA  
15606 OVERCHASE LANE, BOWIE MD 20715 (SADDLEBROOK COMMUNITY)  
Before the  
STATE OF MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
Hearing on  
HOUSE BILL 1056, RACING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACT  
***UNFAVORABLE UNLESS AMENDED TO BE CONSISTENT WITH SENATE BILL 987***  
February 24, 2020

Chairpersons and Members of the House. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the future of the racetrack property that runs along Racetrack Road in Bowie, Maryland (Property). I own a house in the Saddlebrook Community, which can only be accessed from Racetrack Road, and my backyard overlooks the Property. Accordingly, I have a direct and substantial long-term interest in the future of the Property.

**BACKGROUND**

Senate Bill 987 (SB 987) has specific language regarding the future of the Property. For example, SB 987 conveys a small portion of the Property near the Patuxent River to the Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) and the rest of the Property to the City of Bowie. The MNCPPC portion may be developed to hiking and nature. Most significantly, the City of Bowie portion will be reserved for outdoor recreational activities. Bowie State University may join with the City for some recreational use to be determined.

House Bill 1056 (HB 1056) does not contain language specific to the ownership and use of the Property. However, I understand that Delegate Geraldine Valentino-Smith has drafted an amendment to have the provisions in the SB 987 incorporated into HB 1056. For many reasons, particularly the ones summarized below, I fully support Ms. Valentino-Smith's proposal.

**NEED FOR AMENDMENT TO HB 1056**

Before purchasing my home in the Saddlebrook Community, I lived in the Westview Community along Church Road. That was until the housing developers got ahold of it. Racetrack Road, like Church Road, is a curvy, two-lane road that was never intended to have a great volume of traffic. In fact, on Saddlebrook Road, the speed limit is 25 MPH near Yorktown Elementary grade school, and it never gets above 35 MPH the rest of the way to Route 197. You must agree that there are good reasons for that. Church Road is very similar in that respect.

Starting in approximately the year 2000, Prince Georges County announced it was open season along Church Road. And it further decided to allow the many housing developers, particularly the ones in the old turf farm, to route traffic from the new communities there to Church Road. Promises were made to re-route, straighten, and widen Church Road. I still drive along Church Road now 20 years later, and those promises ring hollow. An apparently aborted attempt was made to re-route Church Road to run alongside the Lidl supermarket. But it appears that was done merely to put-in another new housing complex. The new road goes nowhere. Church Road is a mess -- a shining example of what happens when the developers have their way.

The City of Bowie has promised that the Property and Racetrack Road will be different. The City's position is that new houses must not be built in the Property. Delegate Valentino-Smith has many years of experience in Bowie, and she has deep knowledge of why the City's position is sensible.

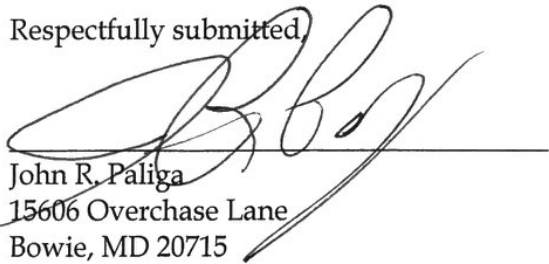
Racetrack Road is dangerous as it is. Each morning I must make a left-hand turn out of Saddlebrook and onto Racetrack Road. On the good mornings, I can dodge into traffic without being hit from the speeding traffic coming in each direction. But if you pass HB 1056 as is and give the developers their way again, there will be more accidents.

I suppose I could get used to that new reality for myself; however, like many of my neighbors, I have two teenage daughters who also must make that same turn to get to school. So, you see, I must do all I can to prevent the further overdevelopment that housing companies surely have in mind for the Property. Someone must stand up for safety. Not just for my wife or me, but for my daughters and all the young adults who live in communities along Racetrack Road in Bowie, who deserve at least a small measure of safety in getting on their way to school.

### CONCLUSION

For all of the reasons stated above, please help me by agreeing to follow the path that has been laid-down by Delegate Valentino-Smith, including amending HB 1056 to contain the provisions noted above and any other that preserve the actual safety (not just promises therefore) of residents along Racetrack Road.

Respectfully submitted,



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