

January 31, 2023

Hon. Melony Griffith
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
Melony.Griffith@senate.state.md.us

Hon. Ben Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
101 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
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Subj: SB 162 /HB 204 Maryland Aviation Commission – Duties, Composition, and Member Orientation

Position: **Support if amended**

Dear Senator, Chair Griffith and Delegate, Chair Barnes:

The Howard County Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) is a business organization dedicated to economic, business, and community development in Howard County and the Central Maryland region. In advancing our mission, we advocate for policies that lead to job creation and investment. It is in accordance with our mission that we write to you currently.

The Chamber is aware of the concerns expressed by various residents pertaining to flight noise from BWI Airport (Airport). We sympathize with the concerns that SB 162 /HB 204 is intended to address. Our concerns are not on the issue itself but in the legislation as currently drafted. There are specific sections in the bill, which we believe should be amended to avoid possible disruption in the operation of the airport operations thereby impacting regional economic development.

First amendment is to eliminate lines 6 through 9 on page 2

This language directs the Maryland Aviation Commission (Commission) to “(II) BEST MITIGATE ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF THE LOCAL AVIATION AND AIRPORT INDUSTRIES, AS INFORMED BY THE ACCEPTED SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON CREATING AND MAINTAINING HEALTHY AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES.”

This would assume that the Maryland Aviation Administration ignores scientific information when making decisions regarding the well-being of the community it serves.

Furthermore, requiring that the mitigation of “negative impacts” be directed by “accepted scientific research” may leave Airport decisions open to multiple interpretations of various, possibly conflicting scientific opinions that could also interfere with important practical considerations that cannot be altered.

Line 26 “(VI) LOCAL GOVERNMENT”

The Airport is already in close communication with local governments. The concerns of the local governments are dealt with in a different time, place, and manner than the other groups in lines 21 through 24 and it would be counter-productive to include them here.

Line 27 “(VII) CITIZENS FROM COMMUNITIES NEAR AIRPORTS; AND”

This would seem redundant in as much as there are already Citizen Advisory Groups, unless, as this language might be interpreted, to include every airport in Maryland, of which there are at least seven. If that is the case, this would expand the responsibility of the Commission well beyond its original mandate.

Second amendment is to eliminate lines 25 through 30 on page 2

Line 25 “(V) AIRPORT EMPLOYEES OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVES”

BWI, as with many large entities, has unions and many employees involved in various aspects of the airport operations, including safety, the well-being of the traveling public and the best interests of the surrounding community. Those employees and unions are free to reach out to the Commission at any time; however, it might be considered unusual for this subtitle to formally solicit input from airport employees and airport unions.

Line 28 -30 “(VIII) OTHER MARYLAND COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE, OR ARE PREDICTED TO HAVE, ADVERSE HEALTH OR LIVABILITY IMPACTS FROM AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH DECISIONS.”

This describes vague groups that are difficult to identify, that could be anywhere, of any size. By referring to “communities that have or are predicted ...” is to admit that such information is unknown and may never develop “health of livability impacts from airport infrastructure and economic growth decisions.”

If airport management were to be subject to this criterion, decision making would become too dispersed by the additional stakeholders with possible conflicting interests.

We should add that many if not most communities welcome the growth and economic activity that follow improvements in airport infrastructure.

Third Amendment, eliminate line 1 through 32 on page 3

“(c) (1) The Commission shall consist of nine members, including the Secretary of Commerce. All but the Secretary of Commerce are voting members. (i) Eight [voting members] appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, four of whom shall be from a list of proposed candidates designated by a resolution of the DC Metroplex BWI Community Roundtable (Roundtable), or its successor organization.”

While it might not be unreasonable to stipulate a minimum of two members of the Commission be member of the Roundtable, it could be unlikely that the Department would recommend that the Governor assign half of the eight voting positions on the Commission to one organization.

In closing and as expressed earlier, the Chamber is not oblivious to the concerns expressed by area residents as it pertains to aircraft noise. Those concerns have not gone unnoticed to MDOT MAA either. They have a long-standing commitment to environmental protection, proactive planning and reducing and mitigating aircraft noise. BWI Marshall has had proactive land use planning dating back to the 1970s and continues to address aircraft noise annoyance through mitigation programs, active public engagement, and transparent long-term planning. Specifically, MDOT MAA has sponsored public outreach; supported the DC Metroplex BWI Community Roundtable; implemented the MDOT MAA Noise and Operations Monitoring System; managed the Residential Sound Insulation Program; conducted Airport Noise Zone and Part 150 Noise Studies; and completed proactive facility planning through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Less we forget, BWI Airport is a major economic driver for the central Maryland region leading to thousands of jobs and millions in private and public investment. While we must take into consideration citizenry impact, it is equally important that we present policies that aid in the continued growth and development of small business and jobs.

If these amendments can be adopted, the Howard County Chamber will support SB 162 HB 204.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Leonardo McClarty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "L" and "M".

Leonardo McClarty, CCE
President, Howard County Chamber