

I am a constituent writing to express my concern and opposition to House Bill 1488 (HB1488) and to request that the committee issue an unfavorable report on this proposed legislation. HB1488 and the companion SB1027 present significant challenges to the fairness and integrity of property tax assessments in our state.

The current system allows for third-party appeals to the Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT), offering an essential mechanism to address under-assessed commercial properties. This process, while sparingly used, plays a crucial role in ensuring assessment accuracy and promoting taxation fairness. **Importantly, there is no documented evidence of abuse within this appeals process and thus, the bill revises a process that is currently working for the taxpayers of Maryland.**

In the case described in the Fiscal and Policy Analysis, HB1488 seeks to circumvent the existing Property Tax Assessment Appeals Board (PTAAB) through retroactive measures. While impacting assessments statewide, the bill singles out a specific case in Kensington, targeting the property at 3700 Plyers Mill Rd. Despite the property's sale price of \$76.25M in August 2022, its initial assessment stood at \$21M. Following a third-party appeal to SDAT in December 2022, **the assessment was appropriately adjusted to reflect the market value.**

Moreover, **HB1488 poses a broader threat by eliminating all future third-party appeals.** In Montgomery County and potentially other jurisdictions, local governments routinely utilize this mechanism to rectify under-assessed properties. **The bill jeopardizes the ability of local authorities to maintain fair and accurate property tax assessments,** as illustrated by the oversight in Kensington.

As outlined in the Fiscal and Policy Note, **the enactment of HB1488 would not only result in significant revenue loss for Montgomery County but also inhibit its ability to challenge unjustifiably low assessments in the future. This would have far-reaching implications for the county's (and the state's) fiscal health and the fairness of its tax system.**

The committee should be aware that this bill was initially drafted by a lobbyist hired by the property owner at 3700 Plyers Mill Rd and the retroactivity date is aimed to moot a timely appeal made after December 1, 2022. Approving a law targeting a specific appeal concerns me about the fundamental fairness of this law and its potential ex post facto application. The current process also provides fairness for the property owners, as it did here, and the owner of 3700 Plyers Mill Rd had ample opportunity to contest this appeal before SDAT rendered its decision. The committee should question whether the law benefits their constituents in general or a single commercial property owner. Allowing the special interests of a single commercial property owner to outweigh that of the community interest in fair taxation makes bad law and poor representation from our elected officials. At a *minimum* the committee should consider not making the law retroactive.

In light of these concerns, I urge your committee to carefully consider the implications of HB1488 and to issue an unfavorable report on this legislation. Preserving the integrity of our property tax assessment system is paramount to ensuring equitable taxation and sustaining vital public services. **ANY OTHER CONCLUSION WOULD BE INTELLECTUALLY DISHONEST!**

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

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