

BACC Urges Passage of HB 807, HB 800, and HB 791

The Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition (BACC) urges passage of three important bills designed to provide needed transparency and oversight to the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC).

HB 807 (formerly MC 1-20) gives the Montgomery County Executive the power to appoint the chair of the seven-member commission that governs HOC, to be confirmed by the county council. The chair is currently selected by the commissioners. This bill has been amended to allow the county council to approve the selection of the chair. BACC believes this step is important for providing greater public accountability, by allowing the county executive to choose a chair that will listen to complaints from residents and other constituencies. The county executive will only be able to select the chair from the existing commissioners, but this step will nonetheless provide greater oversight of the actions of the commission.

HB 800 (formerly MC 2-20) requires HOC to make their public commission meetings available to the public via online video streaming; requires HOC to disclose payment data on a searchable website (as federal, state and county agencies, and MCPS already do); requires HOC to post their annual audit on their website; requires HOC to copy Delegates and Senators on the proposed annual budget they are required to transmit to the county council. With an annual budget in excess of \$250 million annually (10% of which comes from Montgomery County), HOC is the largest real estate holder in Montgomery County. Prudent oversight of such a large amount of money is necessary for the citizens of the state to know its money is being well spent.

HB 791 (formerly MC 5-20) - Requires HOC's procurement rules to be in line with County code. HOC's executive director can currently spend up to \$250,000 per project with little or no approval. By comparison, all county expenditures over \$100,000 must follow a vetting process. This bill has been amended from expenditures above \$25,000 requiring approval to only expenditures above \$150,000. Nonetheless, it is a necessary first step.

We plan to be in Annapolis tomorrow to support you in moving this legislation forward.

Sincerely,
Chris

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