



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB807
Montgomery County - Housing Opportunities Commission - Selection of Chair
MC 1-20
Statement in SUPPORT

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB807 on behalf of the Montgomery County Delegation. This local bill establishes a new procedure for the selection of the chair of the commission that oversees our county's Housing Opportunities Commission. The bill received a strong vote of 16-3 by our Delegation.

The Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) of Montgomery County was established in 1974 to respond to the needs for affordable housing throughout our county. The Commission is authorized to acquire, own, lease and operate housing; to provide for the construction or renovation of housing; obtain financial assistance from any public or private source to assist its housing activities; and arrange for social services and daycare. Their mission is extremely critical to many of the residents throughout our county.

The HOC is overseen by a body of commissioners, each of whom is currently appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. This ensures that the HOC's work as a whole is overseen by an independent body with fiduciary responsibility over the mission and operations. These commissioners serve for a period of 5 years. The Chair of the Commission is selected from within the current commissioners by majority vote.

Due to several calls from members of our community for the need for additional political and public accountability of the Commission, I had introduced local bill MC 1-20. As originally introduced the bill would have allowed the Montgomery County County Executive to appoint the chair of the commission from within the appointed and confirmed commissioners. Concerns were raised that allowing one individual to have this power could unduly sway the work of the commission. As such, we amended the bill to mirror the existing process for the selection of the commissioners. Under the bill as amended, the chair would be selected by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. This balanced approach answers the concerns by residents of the need for additional public accountability, while ensuring that no one individual's views on affordable housing dominates the dialogue.

Due to the critical mission of this commission, and the need for public accountability, I ask the committee for its support of HB805.