

February 27, 2020

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Opposition of House Bill 1544 (Public Ethics and Campaign Activity - County Council Members and County Executives - Limitations on Applicant Contributions)

Dear Chairwoman Kaiser:

The Maryland Building Industry Association (MBIA), representing 100,000 employees of the building industry across the State of Maryland, opposes House Bill 1544 (Public Ethics and Campaign Activity - County Council Members and County Executives - Limitations on Applicant Contributions).

This measure seeks to restrict a party who has submitted an application for a development project to a County Planning and/or Zoning Department from making a campaign contribution to an elected official while the application is pending.

This measure is problematic for several reasons. First, developers are singled out. Many other industries represent their interests before the County Council but are not restricted from supporting campaigns. Such industry targeting is unfair.

This bill also implies that a relationship exists between the site review process and a campaign contribution, as though the County Council would vote to pass a substandard plan as a direct result of receiving a campaign contribution. This is baseless and irrational. Development plans go through a lengthy approval process and receive comments from many different county experts in different departments to ensure a plan is good for homeowners and the county. That, in and of itself, is an insurance that the project adds value to the community and is compliant with all relevant count, state, and federal codes and laws. Furthermore, we have the utmost respect for our elected officials and county staff, and believe them to be highly ethical. The implication that a development plan could pass through such a highly analytical Departmental process and then be voted in favor by a Councilmember because of a contribution is unfounded.

MBIA believes this legislation is problematic and unnecessary, and respectfully requests the Committee give this measure an unfavorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

For more information about this position, please contact Lori Graf at 410-800-7327 or lgraf@marylandbuilders.org.

cc: House Ways and Means Committee Members