

CLEAN AIR PRINCE GEORGES

PATUXENT
RIVERKEEPER

March 30, 2021

Dear Honorable members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Patuxent Riverkeeper, Clean Air Prince George's, and Heron There Farm to urge you to vote against HB980. We concerned this bill, if enacted, will badly erode public trust in government and will also undermine the Prince George's County's ability to ensure that our lands are zoned and used in ways that are protective of the public health, the environment, and natural resources. Zoning has a vital role to play in many different factors that involve the County's wellbeing—including the future of public transportation, air quality, protection of waterways, preservation of agricultural areas and forests. The way that land is used will have an enormous impact on the County's ability to reduce its carbon footprint at time of accelerating climate crisis--woodlands are a big plus—large developments in rural areas add motor vehicle miles and strip away trees.

Passage of HB980 is a signal that developers and special interests will give the green light to "up-zone" properties by contributing to County Council members who have failed to disclose such contributions. The purpose of zoning is prevent, not to encourage, piecemeal land use by those who have financial wherewithal and legal ability to do so.

The bill, by allowing applicants to add their amendments as part of the County's Zoning Map approval forecloses the normal opportunity that the public has to obtain information and provide input in a timely fashion—including advance notice, access to detailed information, and public hearings.

We therefore join with dozens of organizations and citizen to urge the General Assembly members to say No to HB980.

Thank you,

Henry S. Cole, Ph.D.
Co-Chair Clean Air Prince George's
Board Member Patuxent River Keeper
Co-owner Heron There Farm

11229 Mattaponi Road (Croom)
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Dear Honorable members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

We are writing to add the voice of Laurel for the Patuxent, Inc. to the growing chorus of opposition to HB 980.

In this information age the public expects and deserves transparency in it's government. It is the only way to regain and ensure citizens' confidence in their elected officials.

Such transparency provides evidence of ethical - and unethical - behavior by our legislators. The Prince George's County Council has a long history of unethical behavior and lack of transparency when it comes to their dealings with developers. Specifically, accepting campaign contributions from developers and then being asked to vote on zoning, land use and development projects favored by those same developers.

In trying to wordsmith "application," the Prince Georges County Delegation is using HB 980 to again tread the line of ethical governance; this time they are asking the General Assembly of Maryland to fix a mess of their own making.

Sadly, the county's environment and its residents have paid the price for the ethical failings of those who are entrusted with the protection of both.

Facing a climate change crisis, we cannot afford to continue the status quo of developer-dominated decision making, abetted by a County Council that feels free to ignore the Maryland Public Ethics Law when it comes to development within Prince George's County.

We request your unfavorable vote on House Bill 980.

Thank you,

Michael K. McLaughlin

Co-Chair, Laurel For The Patuxent, Inc.

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Environmental Advocacy in Action

Laurel