



Greenbelt Climate Action Network

Committee: Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
Testimony on: HB 980 - Prince George's County - Public Ethics - Definition of Application
Organization: Greenbelt Climate Action Network
Person
Submitting: Lore Rosenthal, Program Coordinator
Position: Unfavorable/Oppose
Hearing Date: April 1, 2021

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

The Greenbelt Climate Action Network is writing to express our **opposition to House Bill 980**.

It is not our intention to stop either the Rewrite or the Prince George's Countywide Zoning Map Amendment (CMA). What we are alarmed by and object to is the ability of developers and their attorneys to file applications for piecemeal zoning intensification that would bypass the usual public engagement and oversight process for zoning change applications during the CMA.

It is affidavits indicating prior campaign contributions to council members, filed by property owners and developer attorneys, that have triggered the Ethics Law provisions and resulted in the Council being unable to meet quorum to complete the CMA process. Because the application filing period has not ended, lifting the ethics ban, as currently written in HB980, would signal open season for developer contributions to pour in, along with even more intensification requests, just as the next election cycle approaches. This does not look good for Prince George's County, and it would be a bad deal for Prince George's residents.

The solution is not HB 980 in its current form - which would exempt the CMA from the Ethics Law. The solution is to either:

- a. Exclude individual intensification applications from the CMA,

OR

- b. Explicitly prohibit the Council from approving any intensification, while simultaneously prohibiting council members who have taken any campaign contribution since either March 1, 2020 or November 1, 2020 from participating in this process. (The public hearing for the CMA was first scheduled for March 2020, then postponed to November 2020).

The Maryland General Assembly has purview over the Maryland Public Ethics Law. The CMA is meant to produce a better zoning map that benefits Prince Georgians. It is not meant to be a vehicle to bypass the Ethics Law or the usual process of citizen engagement and oversight on upzoning, nor is it meant to be a gift horse to developers seeking to enhance their property values.

For all of these reasons, we ask you to **oppose HB980**