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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Sponsor Testimony HB 381: Municipalities – Charter Amendments – Notice
February 8th
House Environment & Transportation Committee

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, Colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to present today on HB 381, an act addressing Municipalities, Charter Amendments, and Notice.

I introduced HB 381 to give small municipalities the option to avoid the burden of having to pay the high cost of newspaper advertising for notifying their residents of proposed charter amendments when they could instead reach those same residents more directly and cheaper by mail or by hand delivery.

Under current law, if municipalities intend to amend their charter or if a charter amendment is proposed by referendum, they are required to publish notices in a “newspaper of general circulation that is available for sale for 4 straight weeks” in order to notify the public of the proposed charter modification. Municipalities with no local paper – like those in Montgomery County - are required to advertise in larger papers, such as the Washington Post. The cost to place an ad in a regional paper can be costly and inefficient.

For example, one of the municipalities in my district paid over \$2,000 for a 1 inch by 3 inch advertisement in a major paper in a classified section most likely overlooked by most of the village residents. The same jurisdiction printed the amendment in a readable form in their monthly newsletter, which is delivered to every home in the village, and on their website along with an explanation of the reasons for altering the Charter.

Residents were probably much more likely to read the jurisdiction’s newsletter than they were to view the Friday classifieds of the Washington Post—the only newspaper of general circulation left standing in their area. I believe this bill provides a common sense option to help our municipalities in certain areas save money, while most importantly, preserving the public notification requirement outlined in statute.

Thank you for your consideration and I urge a favorable report for HB 381.