

Testimony of Edward Fischman
(Chair – Montgomery County chapter of Our Revolution Maryland)

Testimony in Support of HB 470

Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Wilkins, and the Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

I offer this testimony in support of the bill, HB 470, and thank Delegate Palakovich Carr for her steadfastness in her commitment in repeatedly bringing this question before the House. I am testifying on behalf of Our Revolution Maryland which has been advocating for crucial economic and social justice legislation and actions at all levels of government.

When Delegate Palakovich Carr first introduced this proposal, it was part of a larger bill to allow County governments to reform their tax policies, instituting a system of progressive marginal tax brackets and rates. While the General Assembly agreed in concept, passing a version of that bill, the choice was made to strip out the authority to go above the current statewide maximum of 3.25%. That was done in full knowledge that no county would change their rate structure if it meant reducing revenues. Lowering rates for lower-income earners would not happen if a county could not offset those lower collections with an increased rate on higher-income earners. With the exception of the one county which was able to take advantage of the new authority, it was a very disingenuous change. Progressive legislation in name only.

The General Assembly has the opportunity once again to remedy the missed opportunity to make our local tax system fairer. Moreover, governments at all levels are now facing considerable fiscal pressures, with the expiration of federal support provided during the COVID emergency. Empowering County governments with the authority to create a new, higher tax bracket is no longer just a great progressive proposal, it has become a fiscal necessity.

Last year, Montgomery County was forced to enact a property tax increase to fund higher starting wages for teachers. I am sure the Councilmembers and the Executive would have preferred to raise revenue from higher income earners, rather than all property owners. Please give them that authority for the future.

On my own behalf, and on behalf of thousands of Our Revolution members in Maryland, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB470.