

COLUMBIA TOWN CENTER

www.columbiatowncenter.org

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February 21, 2024

**TO: Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary
Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins
HoCo Delegation**

FROM: Columbia Town Center Residential Community Association (TCCA) Board

**RE: House Bill 1356
Candidates for Village Board or Columbia Council in a Village of Columbia –
Reports of Donations and Disbursements
Ho. Co. 7-23
Hearing Date: Upcoming Hearing: Hearing 2/27 at 1:00 p.m.
Position: Oppose**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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We write on behalf of the nearly 10,000 residents of the Village of Town Center in Downtown Columbia as their Board of Directors for the Columbia Town Center Residential Community Association (TCCA). The founder of Columbia, James Rouse, and TCCA strongly supports the principle of local autonomy, believing that each village within Columbia should have the right to establish and enforce its own Board election rules and standards as outlined in their governing By-Laws, Articles and governing documents as prepared by James Rouse and the Howard Research and Development Corporation in the 1970s. We advocate for decisions about election regulations to be made at the community level, fostering a sense of ownership and participation within the villages, including Town Center.

Continued State intervention in all Columbia Villages usurps our authority as a civic organization to determine our own guidelines and policies on elections. TCCA contends that the proposed legislation represents unnecessary state intervention at the present time. We do not see evidence, nor do we have reason to doubt that our community association is unable to manage the processes of village elections as TCCA has for more than fifty years. TCCA has robust election guidelines in place and is interested in continuing to evolve these guidelines to reflect the needs of our community.

The potential for bureaucratic burden is great with this type of oversight. TCCA will spend unnecessary time complying with the proposed reporting requirements. We believe that such regulations could divert resources and attention away from our

COLUMBIA TOWN CENTER COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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primary goal of fostering community engagement and enhancing the overall quality of life for all Town Center Village residents.

Nothing is broken: why are you adding more burden, oversight, and disclosure?

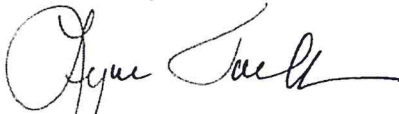
TCCA argues for a more flexible and community-specific approach to address election matters in all Villages. Each Village within Columbia is diverse and unique, requiring tailored solutions that reflect the individual character of each Village. We believe that a one-size-fits-all reporting standard may not adequately serve our distinct community needs and may have a negative impact on diversity, equity and inclusion and pushing people away from running for election.

The services performed by the ten village associations in Columbia are like those performed elsewhere in the State. They are governed by the Maryland Homeowners Association Act in all respects, so there is not, in our humble opinion, a valid reason the State should regulate village elections. Again, nothing is broken.

The TCCA Board strongly urges an **UNFAVORABLE** recommendation by this Committee.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important legislation. We are available to answer any questions the Committee Members may have. Please feel free to contact Lynn Foehrkolb, Board Chair at 410-984-3989 or by email at lynn.foehrkolb@columbiatowncenter.org.

Sincerely,



Lynn Foehrkolb
Chair