



OUR MISSION:

Working to enhance the economic prosperity of greater Silver Spring through robust promotion of our member businesses and unrelenting advocacy on their behalf.

February 28, 2025

The Honorable Delegates Barnes and Chang
and Members of the Appropriations
Committee
120 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairpersons, Barnes and Chang and Members of the Committee:

My name is Stephanie Helsing, and I am the President and CEO of the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce. On behalf of the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce, representing more than 320 employers, mostly small and minority owned businesses, in greater Silver Spring and surrounding areas in Montgomery County, we are submitting these comments of strong support for MC 16-25, Silver Spring Purple Line Construction Zone Parking Improvement Grant Program, introduced by District 20 Delegates Moon, Wilkins and Charkoudian. I first want to thank the District 20 delegation for their tireless support of Silver Spring and Montgomery County.

It is the Chamber's position that this legislation will have a positive impact on the Silver Spring businesses most directly impacted by the ongoing Purple Line construction. With the completion of the project still years away, the viability of these businesses has been directly, and negatively, impacted through no fault of their own. Furthermore, given that the project itself was in partnership with the State, we believe that continued funding for these businesses from the State should continue till the project's completion.

Downtown Silver Spring is home to hundreds of arts, entertainment and food venues that help make it a joyful and flourishing community. The Chamber has always been about making greater Silver Spring a thriving business community, a place where people want to live, work, and come to enjoy what so many of us love about Silver Spring – our wonderful arts and entertainment venues, our breweries, our "United Nations" of restaurants, and our outdoor gathering spaces. It is also along the alignment for the incoming Purple Line, which when completed will be a boon for public transportation and the area, but with the current physical state of the areas and its inaccessibility because of the constant construction, it is hard to see this.

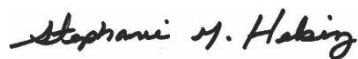
The Chamber has heard from the businesses themselves, as well as residents who wonder why this project has taken so long and why things look the way do. Hearing about loss of contractors, improper budgeting, and underground utility challenges, does little to nothing to dispel their very real fear of losing their business after having already endured over 5 years of construction already. Parking accessibility and recently affordability, due to an increase in cost per hour and length of hours requiring payment, has become a daily hurdle impacting the businesses' customers. Improving parking to allow patrons to more conveniently access these businesses seems a small ask in the scheme of things, given that they have borne the brunt of this project unlike any other business community on the track's trajectory.

In summation, the Chamber wants all businesses to succeed and we believe that MC 16-25, which would establish the Silver Spring Purple Line Construction Zone Grant Program to provide funding for parking options to the areas continuing to be affected by the construction in downtown Silver Spring, begins to address the financial needs created for some businesses in downtown Silver Spring caused by ongoing Purple Line construction. Unfettered access is ultimately the key to a thriving business community and a thriving Silver Spring, which at present does not exist in large areas and will not for years. Improving access to affordable parking in the area might help prevent the loss of jobs and tax revenue if a business is forced to close, realizing that the businesses impacted by this project and this proposed legislation are not large corporate entities, but small businesses.

The Chamber would like to express again its heartfelt appreciation and thanks to Delegate^s Moon, Wilkins, and Charkoudian for their continued support of Silver Spring and taking action when they saw a glaring need being unaddressed. Continuing to support the affected businesses through the completion of this project will be vital to them and allow Silver Spring to take its rightful place as a business and residential hub, and economic engine in Maryland for those who live here, who work here, and who come here to enjoy the wonderful amenities we have to offer.

Should you have questions, don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Helsing
President & CEO