

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Imara Crooms, Resident of District 9 & Candidate for Prince George's County Council

Date: March 24, 2026

Re: OPPOSITION to SB 1005 – Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission - Powers of Local Planning Boards - Alterations

Written Testimony

Members of the Committee:

My name is Imara Crooms. I am a resident of Upper Marlboro in District 9 of Prince George's County, an organizer, an activist, a democracy and governance expert, a farmer, and a candidate for County Council. I am writing today to express my **strenuous opposition to SB 1005**. This bill is no mere administrative alteration, it is a calculated effort to dismantle the bi-county checks and balances of the M-NCPPC and consolidate power and control over land use and public resources in Prince George's County.

I urge the Committee to reject this bill based on the following three critical concerns:

1. Dangerous Consolidation of Power

SB 1005 seeks to decentralize the Commission's legal and administrative functions, placing them directly under the control of local Planning Boards. In Prince George's County, where the Planning Board is appointed by the County Executive, this creates a closed-loop system of governance. By stripping away the independent, bi-county General Counsel, this bill removes the theoretical referee and allows the executive branch to serve as both advocate and decision maker in development decisions. These actions are part of a broader, alarming trend in our county: an attempt to consolidate power to fast-track development and consolidate decision-making ability without community consent.

2. Severe Lack of Transparency and Public Trust

The process surrounding this bill has been an affront to democratic norms. On March 20, the Prince George's County Planning Board convened a virtual emergency meeting with less than 15 hours notice. That meeting lasted only **seven minutes**. There was no substantive discussion, no public input, and the vote was a unanimous 5-0. Notably, two members of the voting body were appointed to their positions less than 48 hours prior to this institution-altering vote. I would argue that this emergency was manufactured to bypass the people whose land and livelihoods are at stake.

3. Fiscal Irresponsibility and Reduced Efficiency

At a time when our residents are facing rising costs, SB 1005 is fiscally reckless. By forcing the duplication of HR, Finance, and IT departments that are currently shared efficiently between Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, this bill will cost taxpayers millions in unnecessary administrative overhead. Fragmentation is not local control, it is a recipe for waste and bureaucratic chaos. Further this proposal worsens our growing distance from the standards of merit driven government employment by consolidating decision-making on these positions under local control.

Conclusion

We are a democracy of the people, not a county of kings. Our planning and land-use institutions must remain transparent, independent, and accountable to the residents they serve, not to the political ambitions of leadership.

I strongly urge a FAVORABLE with AMENDMENTS or, preferably, an UNFAVORABLE report on SB 1005.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Imara Crooms', is written over the printed name.

District 9 Resident & Candidate for County Council