SB 1005 MNCPPC Prince Georges County Planning Boar

Uploaded by: Darryl Barnes

Position: FAV

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
Park and Planning Commission
Prince George's County Planning Board | Office of the Chairman

1616 McCormick Drive, Largo, MD 20774
301-952-3560
pgcpb@ppd.mncppc.org
www.pgplanningboard.org

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Maryland General Assembly
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: SB 1005 Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations

POSITION: SUPPORT **Date:** March 26, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman,

The Prince George's County Planning Board has voted to support this bill. During an Emergency Meeting held virtually on Friday, March 20, 2026, the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission voted 5-0 in support of Senate Bill 1005 Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Board – Alterations.

In a motion to the Planning Board, Vice Chair Manuel Geraldo said, "SB 1005 changes a century-old way of doing business, but I believe it does so for the right reasons. It gives Prince George's County the independence to put our residents first. We are not walking away from regional collaboration. We certainly are not walking away from our employees or our retirees. Our current merit employees are protected as well as our retirees. But at the same time, we make sure that our Commission remains strong. Our neighbors in Montgomery County may disagree, but in the final analysis I believe this bill keeps the Commission intact and our people protected. For those reasons, I move to support Senate Bill 1005."

What this Bill Does. The purpose of this bill is to repeal the requirement that M-NCPPC appoint a general counsel. This bill requires the Montgomery County Planning Board to appoint a legal counsel for the Commission operations conducted primarily in Montgomery County. This bill requires the Prince George's County Planning Board to appoint a legal counsel for the Commission operations conducted primarily in Prince George's County. Legal Counsel appointed under this law, would serve at the pleasure of the appointing county planning board.

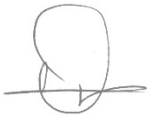
This bill also requires the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Prince George's County Planning Board to exercise direct authority and control over administrative functions for Commission operations within each respective county for: Human Resources , IT, Legal Services and most recently amended, Procurement.

The bill indicates that the Commission may use shared administrative services. The effective date for this bill is October 26, 2026

We believe the bill will provide greater alignment with Prince George's County priorities, faster hiring and workforce responsiveness, direct accountability to County leadership, tailored workforce solutions for County needs, the opportunity to reduce administrative bottlenecks, enhanced human resources support for department leadership, flexibility to innovate and improve processes, and the strengthening of County-level operational independence.

Therefore, we urge this committee to offer a favorable report on this bill.

Sincerely,



Darryl Barnes
Chairman
Prince George's County Planning Board
The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

Prince George's County Executive Testimony

Uploaded by: Aisha Braveboy

Position: FWA

Aisha N. Braveboy
County Executive

Marc Elrich
County Executive

March 26, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support with Amendment: Senate Bill 1005, *Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations*

Dear Chair Feldman:

As the elected County Executives of Montgomery County and Prince George's County, we write today united in support of **Senate Bill 1005, *Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations***, with an amendment that adds procurement to the list of functions that are transferred from central services to separate units under the Montgomery County Planning Board and Prince George's County Planning Board, respectively. The bill with this amendment makes commonsense changes to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC).

In 1927, the Maryland General Assembly created the M-NCPPC to handle "long-range planning and park acquisition and development" in Montgomery County and Prince George's County. For nearly 100 years the commission has been empowered to address land use, preservation, and urban planning in the two counties and "to acquire, develop, maintain, and administer a regional system of parks in the two counties." We say with great confidence that both of our counties have changed dramatically since 1927, growing and maturing into jurisdictions with over or nearly one million residents each.

Over this time, our park and planning systems have grown tremendously, and the needs of our residents have expanded greatly. The M-NCPPC has evolved over the years to address the continually changing landscape. Each County's Planning Board maintains a discrete budget and runs most park and planning programs separate from the other. Currently, Prince George's County contributes more than double the budget than Montgomery County each year, in part because recreation services in Prince George's County are part of the M-NCPPC, which is not the case in Montgomery County. For FY2026, the adopted operating budgets were $493 million and $224 million, respectively.

We call SB 1005 commonsense policy because it folds basic administrative functions, including legal, human resources, and information technology into the respective Planning Boards they support. For the same reason, we ask for an amendment to add the procurement function to the list of functions to which the bill applies. Specifically, on page 3, in line 21, strike "**AND**"; and in line 22,

after "**SERVICES**" insert "**; AND (4) PROCUREMENT**". These are the areas that have experienced unnecessary bottlenecks in the bi-county apparatus. These functions should be as close as possible to the programs they support so they can work quickly and efficiently, saving resources and increasing community responsiveness. A park or planning project in Montgomery County should not be held up because of a bureaucratic delay in the Bi-County Legal Department, any more than a project in Prince George's County should be held up because the Bi-County Department of Human Resources took too long to process hiring a candidate. This is common sense.

The M-NCPPC's role in land use, planning, and zoning recommendations and work with developers has played a significant role in shaping how each of our counties has evolved over decades. Too often we and our predecessors have experienced unfounded delays, a deficit of trust, and a lack of transparency in decision making that has soured potential businesses and investors considering moving or expanding to our counties. As elected leaders, we want to ensure accountability, efficiency, and responsiveness.

As County Executives, we need to feel confident that our County Planning Boards are willing partners in our economic development outreach efforts. Senate Bill 1005 gives us such reassurance by allowing each County Planning Board greater empowerment over its own administrative functions.

The timing is especially critical for Prince George's County as it embarks on the largest economic development project in its history with Sphere, which will work tax increment financing (TIF) through the Prince George's County Planning Board. In Montgomery County, the County Council has passed a series of zoning text amendments to expedite the project approval process, indicating its frustration with the inefficiency. Additional delays will cost each County in lost resources and lost opportunities.

For many years, leaders in both Prince George's County and Montgomery County have suggested changes to the M-NCPPC. We are not asking you to dissolve this 99-year partnership. We are asking you to streamline operations so that the current system will work more efficiently and more transparently. The M-NCPPC oversees a large amount of tax revenue and should be more responsive to the needs of the respective counties and the people who live and work there.

Respectfully,

Aisha Braveboy
Prince George's County Executive

Marc Elrich
Montgomery County Executive

cc: Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Prince George's County Delegations
Montgomery County Delegations

SB 1005 - Prince George's & MoCo Joint Letter to E

Uploaded by: Marc Elrich

Position: FWA

Aisha N. Braveboy
County Executive

Marc Elrich
County Executive

March 26, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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Respectfully,

Aisha Braveboy
Prince George's County Executive

Marc Elrich
Montgomery County Executive

cc: Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Prince George's County Delegations
Montgomery County Delegations

Former Commissioners Letter (Proofed).pdf
Uploaded by: Adrian Gardner
Position: UNF

March 16, 2026

Delivery Via Email Only

The Honorable Julie Palakovich Carr, Chair
Montgomery County House
Lowe House Office Building, Room 202
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Benjamin F. Kramer, Chair
Montgomery County Senate Delegation
Miller Senate Office Building, Room 401
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Ronald L. Watson, Chair
Prince George's County Senate Delegation
James Senate Office Building, Room 121
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Nicole A. Williams, Chair
Prince George's County House Delegation
Lowe House Office Building, Room 207
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Why SB 1005 (Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations) Is A Very Bad Idea

Dear Bi-County Leadership:

As former members of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission ("Commission") who also served as members of the Commission's Prince George's County Planning Board, we write today with one voice. Together, the undersigned cohort spans more than 50 years of Commission stewardship and well over a century of combined public service devoted to the residents of Prince George's County.

For the reasons discussed below, we join with our colleagues serving now on the Commission's Montgomery County Planning Board to unequivocally oppose the General Assembly's consideration of SB 1005, ***Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations***. The Prince George's County Planning Board has not yet voted on a position for the bill.

The bill proposes a shocking reorganization of the Commission by chopping up most of its core administrative functions, creating a duplicative bureaucracy that would cost the taxpayers in the bi-county jurisdictions millions of dollars in the process. The agency's CORPORATE departments include Legal, Human Resources, Finance, Corporate Policy, Risk Management and the Inspector General's office that guards against fraud, waste and abuse. At a minimum, SB 1005 would create havoc within a national and local award-winning agency that has served the residents in Prince George's County and our region with national distinction for nearly a century.

The Commission currently operates with a business model that is designed to take excellent care of the operations in each county by leveraging specialized expertise. For example, a team of lawyers experienced in land use is assigned to each county planning staff, but they collaborate and cover for each other when staffing issues arise. Meanwhile, their supervision is coordinated and other bi-county (centralized) legal teams are specialized in construction contracts, human resources, litigation, etc. This hybrid model works exceptionally well and was praised by both the Prince George's and Montgomery County Councils in their joint study several years ago. Other Commission functions are organized in a comparable fashion – recruitment, information technology and a scandal-free procurement process, for example. It makes no sense to sever the functions as proposed by the bill. Duplicating them would be a huge step in the wrong direction that will result in nothing more than waste.

We also believe you must consider the best interest of more than 5,000 people who are currently depending on the Commission's unified pension system, including almost 2,000 retirees, beneficiaries or individuals who are disabled. Destroying the agency's cohesive structure that currently serves the entire agency will cost county taxpayers more money by disrupting the actuarial balance and fiduciary responsibilities that made the system successful to date.

In summary, SB 1005 represents a misguided attempt to fix something that isn't broken. We challenge you to identify another county government or agency in our region bestowed with more regional or national accolades or awards – awards in planning, parks and recreation, government budgeting, financial reporting, human resources as well as courtroom results. Please let us know. This 100-year-old agency has been a consistent nationwide leader supported by administrative teams with hard-working people who are dedicated to our mission and the people we serve.

Your constituents deserve an unfavorable vote on SB 1005.

Sincerely,

Charles Dukes, Former Chair
Elizabeth M. Hewlett, Former Chair
Samuel J. Parker, Jr., Former Chair
John W. Rhoads, Former Chair
Dorothy F. Bailey, Former Vice-Chair
Howard W. Stone, Jr., Former Vice Chair
Sarah A. Cavitt, Former Member
Jesse Clark, Former Member
William M. Doerner, Former Member
A. Shuanise Washington, Former Member

cc: Members of the Prince George's and Montgomery County Delegations
President, M-NCPPC Retirees Association

Letter re Planning Boards for Bi-County Delegation

Uploaded by: Adrian Gardner

Position: UNF

LAW OFFICE

Gardner Legal Service LC

312 Severn Avenue, Suite W300
Annapolis, Maryland 21403
Telephone: (301) 792-1011

Reply To:
Adrian R. Gardner*
gardnerlegalservice@gmail.com

*** Admitted in Maryland and DC**

March 19, 2026

Delivery Via Email Only

The Honorable Julie Palakovich Carr, Chair
Montgomery County House Delegation

The Honorable Benjamin F. Kramer, Chair
Montgomery County Senate Delegation

The Honorable Ronald L. Watson, Chair
Prince George's County Senate Delegation

The Honorable Nicole A. Williams, Chair
Prince George's County House Delegation

Re: **Fact-Checking SB 1005** / Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations

Dear Chairs of the Bi-County Delegations:

This letter is provided in response to communications with members in both county delegations seeking a reasonable explanation of the issues raised by an apparently AI-powered blog post regarding the relationship between the Prince George's County Planning Board (the "Prince George's Board") vis-à-vis the Montgomery County Planning Board ("Montgomery Board") of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission ("Commission" or "Agency"). As discussed below, much of that blog post was demonstrably off-base.

As a lawyer who proudly represented the Commission in Annapolis, Rockville, Upper Marlboro and various courtrooms across Maryland for more than two decades, I have styled my thoughts into a question and answer format for your convenience.

Q1: Does the Montgomery County Board enjoy a "structural veto [over] development ambitions" in Prince George's County?

A1: Absolutely not.

Each planning board has independent and exclusive statutory autonomy to act on subdivision applications and other development approvals that are exclusively local in scope. With rare exceptions that happen once or twice every ten years or so, the Montgomery Board never considers or votes on development applications situated within Prince George's County; nor does the Prince George's Board vote on applications in the sister jurisdiction. Each board's approvals are handled separately under Section 20-202 of the Maryland Land Use Article, which provides in relevant part:

(a) [Each] county planning board:

(i) is responsible for planning, subdivision, and zoning functions that are primarily local in scope; and

(ii) shall exercise, within the county planning board's jurisdiction, the following powers:

1. **planning;**
2. **zoning;**
3. **subdivision;**
4. **assignment of street names and house numbers; and**
5. **any related matter.**

(b) [Each] county planning board has <u>exclusive</u> jurisdiction over:

(i) local functions, including:

1. **the administration of subdivision regulations;**
2. **the preparation and adoption of recommendations to the district council with respect to zoning map amendments; and**
3. **the assignment of street names and house numbers in the regional district; and**

(ii) mandatory referrals made … by the county planning board's respective county government or any unit of the county government.

(Emphasis added.)

Under these statutes, the Prince George's County Planning Board always enjoyed – and always has exercised – "the ability to act without Montgomery's permission" on development projects. Assertions to the contrary simply are misinformed at best.

Q2: Do Montgomery County Zoning or Subdivision Laws Ever Apply in Prince George's County?

A2: Nope.

The authority to enact zoning and subdivision rules is delegated separately to each county government. Sections 22-101 and 22-201 of the Land Use Article cover authority for zoning in each county, and Section 23-104 covers each county's authority to regulate subdivisions.

These statutes have been in place for nearly 75 years. Under them, each county has a separate zoning ordinance enacted by its respective County Council sitting in the special capacity of an agency of the State designated as a "District Council." Along with a separate zoning map that is promulgated by each District Council, the zoning ordinances control what types of development (commercial, residential, etc.), the density, height, as well as the specific uses that will be allowed on each piece of property in that respective county.

Likewise, each county government has a separate set of subdivision regulations that control the details – parking spaces, landscaping requirements, school capacity, for example – that apply on a project-by-project basis to each specific development proposal. There are also separate sets of rules that apply to the broad array of standards and procedures in the development process that have been promulgated by each of the county jurisdictions.

It's ineluctable that the rules applied by each board are specific to its respective county.

Q3: Do Both Planning Boards Ever Work Together on Anything?

A3: Certainly yes.

Even though they each have independent statutory authority for most regulatory functions, there are several examples where the Commission's Planning Boards have joined forces to protect both counties and advance the public interest in each.

Perhaps the most recent example is when the Commission stood up to the disastrous proposal by MDOT to widen the Capitol Beltway. The prevailing concerns in Montgomery County were to avoid the neighborhood and environmental disruption of widening the Northern segment from I-95 to American Legion Bridge with multiple so-called "Lexus Lane" tolls. The prevailing concerns in Prince George's County involved ensuring that MDOT's plan would include an interchange to support access to our new University of Maryland Medical Center and the failure the plan to count all the traffic heading toward the Wilson Bridge/ MD 210/ US295 exchange near National Harbor. The Commission's cohesive bi-county workgroup helped both counties navigate and prevail despite MDOT's labyrinthic NEPA study process.

There are several other historical examples, for example, developing the consensus for a workable alignment for the Purple Line; managing the inter-county master plans for the Takoma-Langley Park Corridor at University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue; honest-brokering plans by USDA and FDOT to plan a maglev rail facility through Prince George's County; and joining together to acquire and manage the spectacular facilities located now in Fairland Park (Laurel).

Yes. There are examples of regional initiatives where the Commission acts together. In fact, the unified Commission routinely reviews and votes to approve most master plans together. However, there has not been one instance – not one single time that I or anyone else can remember – where one Planning Board has objected to or voted against a plan presented by the other. The coordinated review simply ensures that the entire agency can comment and support the planning work in both counties.

In short, the planning boards historically have worked effectively together.

Q4: Why Does It Matter How Lawyers Are Hired?

A4: Taxpayers Need Specialization and Agency-Wide Consistency Where It Matters.

Published Commission rules actually assign each Planning Board a separate team of lawyers that is specialized in the land use issues and local laws relevant to each respective county. But the Agency's bi-county rules also ensure that consistency is maintained for employment law,

litigation and other agency-wide disputes. As 10 former chairs, vice-chairs and members of the Prince George's County Planning Board recently wrote:

> **[A separate] team of lawyers experienced in land use is assigned to each county planning staff, but they collaborate and cover for each other when staffing issues arise. Meanwhile, their supervision is coordinated and other bi-county (centralized) legal teams are specialized in construction contracts, human resources, litigation, etc. This hybrid model works exceptionally well and was praised by both the Prince George's and Montgomery County Councils in their joint study several years ago. Other Commission functions are organized in a comparable fashion – recruitment, information technology and a scandal-free procurement process, for example.**

In other words, by Agency regulation, the Commission's General Counsel's office already assigns each county planning board with "their own" lawyers for its regulatory functions, which should obviate the reasons stated for the legislation.

Meanwhile, it would be an unmitigated disaster for the agency to have separate counsel for human resources, information technology, procurement, etc. Those functions are decidedly corporate-wide because consistency in the interpretation of agency statutes, regulations and policies is so essential.

* * *

I sincerely hope that this information helps to clear things up as you consider the serious drawbacks with SB 1005. Please do not hesitate to let me know if members have other questions or I can be of any further assistance.

Very truly yours,
Gardner Legal Service LC

Adrian R. Gardner

DISCLOSURE: This communication is provided on a pro bono basis and exempt under Section 5-702 of the Maryland Public Ethics Law.

Trudye Morgan Johnson SB 1005.pdf
Uploaded by: Adrian Gardner
Position: UNF

Trudye Morgan Johnson
13431 Haddonfield Lane
Darnestown, Maryland 20878

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Maryland General Assembly
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Stop! Oppose SB 1005

Dear Chair Feldman:

In MNCPPC's 99-year history, one politician or another has thought it expedient to kill the perceived fatted goose! Well, this goose is not fat, but it is golden in providing exemplary services to the residents of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. This is not happening by chance, but by design. The Bi-county corporate functions are the glue that aligns MNCPPC with its core mission while delivering distinct services tailored to the needs of the respective counties.

As a former Director of both the Montgomery County Department of Recreation and Executive Director of the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, I have served both counties. I also spent considerable time working in and with the community, having built the Upcounty Government Center before taking on those positions. SB 1005 is not coming to you from communities served by the Commission, nor has the community had an opportunity to discuss and understand the implementation of such an action.

SB 1005, if permitted to proceed, will surely rip the heart out of a now uniform Commission. There is no basis for you to assume carving out Legal, Finance, Human Resources, Risk Management, Corporate Policy, and the Inspector General's Office will yield offsetting efficiencies, not to mention policies and procedures appropriate for a public, state-enabled agency. Would such an action be appropriate for WSSC? It also makes little sense to assign these functions to the respective planning Boards. Their discrete time should be dedicated to the respective Councils' work priorities. Policy approval is one thing; however, day-to-day supervision of administrative functions is another.

I urge you to put the brakes on this idea. Please send this bill back to its makers and give them the time to discuss the problem they are trying to solve. As a public employee of over 44 years and a bi-county resident, I am proud to have had the opportunity to serve the Commission and the respective counties.

Regards,

Trudye Morgan Johnson

Trudye Morgan Johnson

Executive Director (Retired)

Montgomery County Department (Retired)

cc: The Honorable Benjamin Kramer, Chair, Montgomery County Senate Delegation
The Honorable Julie Palakovich Carr, Chair, Montgomery County House Delegation

UFCW Local 1994 Testimony in OPPOSITION to SB1005.

Uploaded by: Amy Millar

Position: UNF

UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO
Building a Better Life for Maryland's Working Families

Gino Renne *President* | **Lisa Blackwell-Brown** *Secretary-Treasurer* | **Lisa Titus** *Recorder*

301-977-2447
600 S. Frederick Ave
Suite 200
Gaithersburg, MD 20877

Testimony of UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO
SB 1005 - Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations

Oppose

Gino Renne, President
UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO

On behalf of the members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1994 MCGEO, I write to express our strong opposition to SB 1005 – Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission – General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations. This legislation proposes to dismantle the agency's coordinated authority over its core administrative functions, including the Office of General Counsel, human resources, information technology, and—based on a pending amendment—potentially the agency's procurement system.

Despite our understandable disagreements from time to time, after working with dozens of agency leaders over several decades, MCGEO knows that dismantling the Commission's administrative backbone would lead to significant disruption and undermine the professional stability of our members.

First and foremost, we find it unconscionable to consider dismantling the agency's centralized human resources system. Creating a dual system for recruitment, classification, or collective bargaining would inevitably lead to inconsistent treatment—including disparities in compensation—for employees with comparable knowledge, skills, and abilities. Beyond the expertise of the experienced HR professionals currently serving the Commission, every organization relies on strong institutional memory and the consistent application of rules and policies.

This bill could ultimately undermine the protections and gains that M-NCPPC employees have earned over many years. It is misguided legislation that could harm both the employees and the communities they serve.

Second, creating a dual employment system would almost certainly produce disparities within the agency's pension system and other competitive benefits that help the

Commission recruit and retain qualified employees. It is simply not feasible to divide the HR system or create a parallel workforce without also altering the structure of the existing pension fund. This is a risk that none of our members, other Commission professionals, retirees, or beneficiaries should have to bear.

From an operational perspective, this legislation makes little sense and jeopardizes the quality of the Commission's services.

In our view, the proposal appears politically motivated—an attempt to wrest authority from a bi-county governing structure that has served the region well and shift power toward a system driven more by political considerations than sound administration.

Commission employees, and the communities we serve in both counties, deserve the consistent application of rules, regulations, and policies—not competing boards attempting to "direct and control" the agency.

The men and women we represent will lose if this bill passes. Our members are the ones who drive and repair the trucks, cut the grass, trim the trees, maintain the parks, and deliver one of the best park and recreation systems in the nation.

Please do not do this to them or their families.

Position Statement SB1005_Montgomery County Planni

Uploaded by: Artie Harris

Position: UNF

Montgomery County Planning Board
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

2425 Reedie Drive
Floor 14
Wheaton, MD 20902

MontgomeryPlanningBoard.org

Position Statement on SB1005
From the Montgomery County Planning Board

Bill: SB1005 Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations

Position: Oppose **Date:** March 24, 2026

Contact: Jordan Baucum Colbert, Senior Government Affairs Analyst

To the Chair, Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Dear Chair Brian Feldman,

The Montgomery County Planning Board has voted to **oppose** this bill.

What the Bill Does. Repealing the requirement that the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission appoint a general counsel; requiring the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Prince George's County Planning Board to appoint legal counsel for Commission operations within each respective county subject to certain requirements; requiring the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Prince George's County Planning Board to exercise direct authority over certain functions within each county; etc.

Montgomery Planning Board General Comments. The Montgomery County Planning Board expresses strong and unequivocal opposition to Senate Bill 1005. We urge the Committee to reject this legislation due to the serious and far-reaching risks it poses to the financial stability, operational integrity, and long-term viability of the bi-county planning framework that has served Maryland residents for nearly a century.

The Montgomery County Planning Board stands by its support for The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and its 5,000 employees. This legislation threatens the agency's financial and operational stability and will have a serious impact on staff, retirees, and taxpayers.

SB1005 is not a minor structural adjustment. It represents a fundamental dismantling of a system that is functioning effectively, efficiently, and in the best interests of both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is a nationally recognized model for coordinated regional planning. Its bi-county structure is not only sound – it is essential to delivering consistent, high-quality planning and parks services across county lines.

This bill would destabilize core systems that thousands of employees and retirees depend on, including pension administration, workforce structures, and shared operational functions. It will divert the Planning Boards from their core mission and responsibilities to now directly oversee administrative functions. It introduces uncertainty into areas where stability is critical, and it does so without a clear implementation

plan, without fiscal safeguards, and without addressing the significant administrative and financial burdens it would impose on both counties.

At a time when Montgomery and Prince George's Counties are already facing difficult budget decisions, SB1005 would create new, unfunded liabilities and force both jurisdictions to absorb costs that have not been fully analyzed or justified. The bill risks undermining the very services residents rely on: planning, development review, and parks, by disrupting the systems that support them.

Importantly, these concerns are not limited to the current Board. A number of former Commissioners, including several from Prince George's County, have voiced strong objections to SB1005. Their bipartisan, cross-county perspectives reinforce what we know to be true: the bi-county structure is working and dismantling it would cause more harm than good. In addition, the Montgomery County Council has submitted a letter in opposition to the bill due to the harm it will cause to the Commission.

We value our long-standing partnership with Prince George's County, but on this issue, we must be clear. **SB1005 is not in the best interest of our workforce, our retirees, our taxpayers, or the residents we jointly serve.** The risks are too great, the costs too high, and the consequences too destabilizing.

We urge the Maryland General Assembly to vote against this legislation so that the M-NCPPC can once again focus on its shared mission serving the residents of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

###

SB 1005
Uploaded by: Beth Novick
Position: UNF

From: Beth Novick

Date: March 25, 2026

Subject: UNFAVORABLE – SB 1005 (Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations)

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Beth Novick. I reside at 2 Forestway in Greenbelt, MD, and I am a small business owner in the Greenbelt community. I am writing to strongly urge an **unfavorable report on SB 1005**.

My husband and I have spent over forty years raising our family and managing a small business in Greenbelt. I recently retired after a thirty-two year career teaching in PGCPS. We have made a purposeful choice to live where we work, and every day we are driven by the goal of ensuring our neighbors and family are safe, happy, and afforded every opportunity to thrive.

For the sake of accountability and community context, I also want to note that our Greenbelt district was recently represented by Ingrid Watson—wife of Senator Ron Watson—who has now transitioned to her appointment as CEO of the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation. As a business owner, I am particularly attuned to how leadership transitions and legislative shifts like SB 1005 impact our local economic landscape.

I am deeply concerned that this legislation would dismantle the coordinated, bi-county structure of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). This commission has successfully served our region for nearly a century by ensuring that Prince George's and Montgomery Counties work in tandem on critical infrastructure and environmental goals.

In a place like Greenbelt, M-NCPPC is the invisible hand behind almost everything involving land, from the local parks where my grandchildren play to the zoning laws that affect my business.

Key concerns for Greenbelt:

- Threat to Regional Transit Coordination: Greenbelt sits at a vital crossroads of regional transit. I believe that continued, seamless cooperation with Montgomery County regarding the Purple Line is essential for our local economy and residents. SB 1005 threatens to fragment the very administrative and legal frameworks that allow these bi-county projects to move forward efficiently.
- Economic Impact on Small Businesses: As a small business owner, I value the stability and regional connectivity that a unified planning commission provides. Decentralizing legal and administrative functions is a "local mandate" that will likely lead to increased costs and bureaucratic redundancies. These inefficiencies ultimately burden taxpayers and small businesses like mine.
- Impact on Local Planning and Parks: Greenbelt's unique identity is tied to its green spaces and thoughtful urban planning. Weakening the central Commission risks undermining the "shared services" model that protects our regional parks and ensures consistent land-use standards across county lines.

- Unnecessary Fragmentation: This bill appears to solve a problem that does not exist while creating new ones—specifically, the duplication of legal counsel and administrative staff for each county. This fragmentation will only make it harder for Greenbelt to advocate for its needs within a cohesive regional vision.

The "bi-county" nature of our planning is not a hindrance; it is a strength that has allowed projects like the Purple Line to bridge our communities. Breaking apart these functions will lead to higher costs, less transparency, and a lack of coordination on the environmental and transportation issues that matter most to Greenbelt.

I respectfully ask for an **unfavorable report on SB 1005.**

Sincerely,

Beth Novick 2 Forestway

Greenbelt, MD 20770

bnovick3@gmail.com

SB1005 -- Maryland-National Capital Park and Plann

Uploaded by: Brian Levine

Position: UNF

Senate Bill 1005 -- *Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards - Alterations*
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 26, 2026
Oppose

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (MCCC), the voice of business in Metro Maryland, opposes Senate Bill 1005 -- *Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards - Alterations.*

Senate Bill 1005 repeals the requirement that the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission appoint a general counsel and requires the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Prince George's County Planning Board to appoint legal counsel for Commission operations within each respective county.

The Chamber opposes Senate Bill 1005 due to its significant fiscal and operational impacts, many of which remain undefined and require additional time for evaluation. As a late-filed bill, it has not undergone the thorough review that a proposal of this scope and consequence warrants. The bill would require the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to establish separate legal, human resources, information technology, contracting, and management functions for each county, an administratively complex and costly restructuring mandate whose full ramifications are still unclear.

For Montgomery County, the bill would introduce substantial new budget pressures at a time when the Fiscal Year 2027 operating budget has already been proposed, and all departments are being asked to reduce spending. Senate Bill 1005 would necessitate new positions, new systems, and new administrative processes that are neither funded nor planned for. Duplicating many functions currently shared between counties could significantly increase costs for taxpayers during an already challenging budget environment.

The bill also creates uncertainty for the business community. This abrupt reorganization would divert Commission leadership's attention away from economic development and toward managing a costly and disruptive transition. At a time when strengthening competitiveness and attracting employers are critical priorities, Senate Bill 1005 risks undermining economic stability and long-term growth.

For these reasons, the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce opposes Senate Bill 1005 and respectfully requests an unfavorable report.

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (MCCC), on behalf of its members, champions the growth of business opportunities, strategic infrastructure investments, and a strong workforce to position Metro Maryland as a premier regional, national, and global business location. Established in 1959, MCCC is an independent, non-profit membership organization.

Brian Levine | Vice President of Government Affairs
Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
51 Monroe Street | Suite 1800
Rockville, Maryland 20850
301-738-0015 | www.mcccmd.com

STATEMENT OF ROYCE HANSON (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Caroline Taylor

Position: UNF

STATEMENT OF ROYCE HANSON

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

OPPOSING SB 1005

March 25, 2026

Chair Feldman, Members of the Committee:

I apologize for not appearing in person but I will be out of state and of an age that makes improvident standing three or more hours to prove that I am harmless to the security of the United States.

When I learned of SB 1005, I hoped that the perspective gained from my experience of serving twice as chair or vice chair of the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (as chair of the Montgomery County Planning Board) for a total of 15 years, reflection on that experience, and several decades of teaching and research on issues of planning and urban development might be of some help to the committee as it considers this unfortunate bill.

I urge the committee to kill this bill, which would gut the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission of the function that gives it the independence necessary to speak truth to power on vital issues of land use and development, parks, recreation, and resource conservation in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. This bill strips the commission of its general counsel, its bi-county human resources system, which manages its merit system, and its bi-county information technology system. I will focus first on the office of general counsel, its importance to the commission and the respective county planning boards.

This is the latest of periodic attempts to dismember the commission over its 100-year history. These efforts generally were triggered by some action of the commission or its general counsel that upset a county executive or council by offering advice they did not want to hear. Providing truth to power is, of course, one of the most important responsibilities of the commission and its principal officers and staff. It is a particular responsibility of the general counsel. The bill solves a problem that does not exist. It is not only a bad idea. It will materially damage the quality and integrity of the commission's work in both counties.

The planning boards deal with development, the most important economic activity and politically the most sensitive in the two counties. It is critical for commissioners and staff to have highly competent and independent legal advice and support for their decisions. Because the general counsel, as a statutory officer of the commission, must be chosen and can be dismissed only by the full commission,

that arrangement provides a level of insulation from the politics of each county and an important guard against corruption.

It has been a key to making the commission one of the most effective planning organizations in the nation. Over the 100-year history of the commission, its office of general counsel has become one of foremost land use and park law practices in the country. It has out-lawyered some of the most prominent land use attorneys in the country and provided the legal foundation for some of the most innovative land use policies in the nation.

As one who has served longer than anyone else as a planning commissioner and board chair in my county I relied heavily and often on that office. Its institutional independence within the commission from my direct or exclusive control ensured that the advice of counsel I received was never shaded to please me but to help me understand the legal alternatives for and consequences of proposed actions and to guide the board in making decisions that could withstand well-financed legal assault. I could count on the lawyers in that office to provide experienced and thoughtful counsel in the development of new policies to meet the needs of the county. At the same time, I never doubted that the general counsel would vigorously defend decisions of the board. I can attest personally that most of the planning innovations credited to the boards on which I served would not have succeeded without the wise advice of the office of General Counsel.

Having the General Council be a *commission* officer ensures that each board & department receives independent advice because the General Counsel is not dependent on any one board or its chair, but is responsible to the whole commission. Associate general counsels assigned to the Planning Boards and as department legal advisers are responsible to the General Counsel—not to the separate board chairs, the boards, or the departments. Their positions are analogous to the relationship of the Attorney General to the governor and executive departments. A brief notice of the current relationship of the U.S. Department of Justice to the president illustrates the unwisdom of making the law the servant of politics. The independence and professional quality of the office of General Counsel is also a significant factor in the commission's relationship with the bond rating agencies as they assess the overall effectiveness and stability of commission management.

There are additional advantages to the arrangement. It facilitates cross-fertilization of ideas and experience between the counties and has built over a century, a body of law common to both while accommodating unique policies pursued separately. Pooling resources of the two counties enables support of a high quality legal staff that neither county alone would likely provide. Giving attorneys experience in both counties broadens perspectives and makes it possible to recruit outstanding young

attorneys to work at the commission, many of whom have become outstanding practitioners at private firms. Having a strong central office also provides valuable support and backup for young attorneys and associate counsel assigned to departments and to advise the boards. The breadth of responsibilities of the office and its relative independence has made it possible to persuade outstanding lawyers to take the position of general counsel.

The division of the IT and HR functions is just bad management and dumb economics. These are service functions that by placing them in the bi-county offices provides economies of scale, provides for a commission-wide personnel system that helps recruiting and career development, and a more robust IT system. They are, aside from budgeting and general administrative e services, the most important functions of the executive director and they are essential to the operations of the Secretary-Treasurer of the Commission.

SB 1005 is not well-conceived and may, I fear, may not be well-intended. It should not go forward.

CSG Oppose SB 1005 Dismantle MNCPPC.pdf
Uploaded by: Cheryl Cort
Position: UNF

Coalition for Smarter Growth
DC • MD • VA

Testimony on SB 1005:
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Board

Before the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Date: March 24, 2026
Position: **UNFAVORABLE**

The Coalition for Smarter Growth opposes SB 1005.

CSG advocates for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the Washington, DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

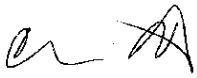
We are deeply concerned that this bill harms both Prince George's and Montgomery counties. It potentially disrupts ongoing work to provide planning, development review, and park services to two major jurisdictions, and would weaken the regional coordination that is a core role for this bi-county agency – in the areas of the environment, land use, transportation, and parks.

SB 1005 would effectively dismantle M-NCPPC bi-county functions without any study, fiscal analysis, or a clear reason for making these drastic changes. The cost to both counties could be substantial during a time of fiscal stress on local governments.

We urge fuller consideration of its implications before making such a dramatic change. The far-reaching effects of the bill on the planning boards, and the planning and parks departments should be fully considered before rushing through legislation.

We ask for an **unfavorable** report for SB 1005 by the committee. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Cort
Maryland Housing Advocacy Manager

SB1005 Testimony - Darlene Douglas.pdf
Uploaded by: Darlene Douglas
Position: UNF

Good afternoon, my name is Darlene Douglas. I am President of an elected M-NCPPC Retirement Association Board. I represent 709 retirees in the agency's Employee Retirement System, as of June 2024.

1. Within the first week of our notice about the legislation, our Planning Boards took differing positions: Montgomery County voted to oppose it on Thursday, March 12th. Prince George's County voted to approve on March 19th.

2. Prince George's vote happened in a hastily called ten-minute emergency, virtual meeting.

3. The timing is also troubling: New Commissioner Brittany Jenkins was sworn in on March 18th, and new Commissioner Lori Matthews was sworn in on March 19th. They were called upon to vote on a public policy with long-term consequences on an agency a century old. It is hard to believe there was enough time for a full review.

4. This is especially concerning, given a March 16th letter from TEN former Prince George's Planning Board members. They opposed this measure. And they have deep institutional knowledge. That letter was provided to the Rules Committee and all the members of the House and Senate Delegations of Montgomery & Prince George's.

5. There also appears to be no public discussion of fiscal impact. Advancing legislation of this scale without financial transparency is concerning. If analysis occurred only in the Executive Session, that raises further concerns about transparency.

6. M-NCPPC's regional structure was designed as a safeguard. It helps balance developers' pressures and political influence. Weakening that structure risks losing that balance.

7. There is little evidence that bifurcation will better serve residents.

8. Dismantling the agency's Central Administrative Services (CAS), will reduce oversight and accountability.

9. CAS provides consistency and discipline within the agency's merit rules & regulations & General Counsel's direction about laws.

10. The fiscal impact of this move should be carefully evaluated, including its long-term effects on the residents the Commission serves.

Thank you.

Darlene Douglas, President

M-NCPPC Retirees Association

March 24, 2026 - G. Geoffrey Collins (Opposition t

Uploaded by: G. Geoffrey Collins

Position: UNF

March 24, 2026

The Honorable Julie Palakovich Carr, Chair
Montgomery County House Delegation

The Honorable Benjamin F. Kramer, Chair
Montgomery County Senate Delegation

The Honorable Ronald L. Watson, Chair
Prince George's County Senate Delegation

The Honorable Nicole A. Williams, Chair
Prince George's County House Delegation

Re: Opposition to SB 1005 / Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations

Dear Chairs of the Bi-County Delegations:

I strongly oppose SB 1005, which proposes a harmful reorganization of the Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission. By dismantling core administrative functions like Legal, HR, and Finance, the bill would create a duplicative and costly bureaucracy, wasting millions in taxpayer funds.

The Commission's current hybrid business model is an award-winning success. It efficiently leverages specialized expertise across both counties while maintaining centralized oversight for procurement, IT, and legal services. Breaking this unified structure makes no sense and would significantly diminish the agency's effectiveness.

Furthermore, SB 1005 threatens the pension system for over 5,000 employees and retirees. Disrupting the cohesive structure that supports this system jeopardizes its actuarial balance and fiduciary stability, ultimately costing taxpayers more.

SB 1005 is a misguided attempt to fix a high-performing, 100-year-old agency that isn't broken. For the sake of fiscal responsibility and agency excellence, I urge an unfavorable vote on this bill.

In the best interests of sound public policy, residents of Prince George's and Montgomery counties stand up for an unfavorable vote on SB 1005.

Best regards,

Gordon Geoffrey Collins
Route 202 Neighborhood Coalition
3309 Asher Street
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
301-466-3005

Testimony Opposing SB1005

Uploaded by: Greg Smith

Position: UNF

Oppose Senate Bill 1005

Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Committee Members,

I respectfully urge the Committee to report unfavorably on Senate Bill 1005.

I have worked on a range of environmental, transportation, public health, land use, and good government issues in Montgomery County and more recently in Prince George's County since 1990. Since July 2018, I have testified before the Prince George's County Planning Board and the District Council many times, on multiple land cases and on proposed legislation. I have been a party to multiple legal challenges to Planning Board and Council decisions. In 2021, I helped coordinate a grassroots campaign by civic, environmental, good government, and justice organizations to block legislation that would have gutted important State Ethics Law provisions that apply to zoning and land use in Prince George's County.

No Transparency and No Serious Public Discussion on the Prince George's County Side

SB 1005 could have profound fiscal and operational impacts on the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, on its subsidiary agencies, and its employees, and on their ability to carry out the Commission's vital mission. Planning, zoning and land use decisions can and often do have profound, wide-ranging, and long-lasting impacts on communities, public health, the environment, public services and infrastructure, local businesses, family finances, and our ability to address climate change.

Yet there has been essentially ***no*** transparency in Prince George's County around this late-filed, consequential bill. Despite being fairly aware of General Assembly legislation, I learned about SB 1005 only late last week and only through a blog post.

As far as I know, ***no*** Prince George's County agency has published an analysis of SB 1005's potential fiscal and operational impacts. The only impacts analysis I have seen is the attached draft outline developed by the Montgomery County Planning Board, which concisely lays out numerous impacts and apparently legitimate concerns.

Likewise, I don't know of ***any*** serious public discussion in Prince George's County regarding the purposes of and potential impacts of SB 1005. Instead, with ***less than 15 hours notice***, the County Planning Board convened a "emergency meeting" on the morning of March 20, where it voted five to zero support SB 1005. That meeting lasted ***seven*** minutes. Two members had been appointed only last Wednesday, ***less than 48 hours*** before voting to support such a consequential bill. A third member was appointed only last November. There were ***no*** substantive discussion or questions, other than Commissioner Geraldo expressing general concern about potential impacts on merit employees and retirees.

Here is the link to that March 20 meeting: PG Planning Board March 20 Emergency Meeting

Tellingly, on March 16, ten former members of the Prince George's County Planning Board, including four former chairs and two former vice-chairs, sent to the leaders of the Prince George's County and Montgomery County Senate and House Delegations the attached letter detailing why SB 1005 should be rejected. It is highly likely that any one of those ten former Planning Board members has more experience than four of the Planning Board's five current members combined. However capable our current Planning Board members may be, the numerous concerns raised by those ten former Planning Board members, by the Montgomery County Planning Board, and other parties should be given serious consideration.

To be clear, there are many ways that the practices and decisions of M-NCPPC and its agencies can and should be improved, but identifying and implementing those reforms require serious analysis and discussion, transparency, and public participation. Unfortunately, SB 1005 and the process by which it has been fast-tracked provide none of that. Our communities and our public employees deserve better.

I urge you to issue an unfavorable report.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and public service.

Sincerely,

Greg Smith
3103 Bunker Hill Road
Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712
(240) 605-9238
gpsmith@igc.org

March 16, 2026

Delivery Via Email Only

The Honorable Julie Palakovich Carr, Chair
Montgomery County House
Lowe House Office Building, Room 202
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Benjamin F. Kramer, Chair
Montgomery County Senate Delegation
Miller Senate Office Building, Room 401
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Ronald L. Watson, Chair
Prince George's County Senate Delegation
James Senate Office Building, Room 121
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Nicole A. Williams, Chair
Prince George's County House Delegation
Lowe House Office Building, Room 207
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Why SB 1005 (Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations) Is A Very Bad Idea

Dear Bi-County Leadership:

As former members of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission ("Commission") who also served as members of the Commission's Prince George's County Planning Board, we write today with one voice. Together, the undersigned cohort spans more than 50 years of Commission stewardship and well over a century of combined public service devoted to the residents of Prince George's County.

For the reasons discussed below, we join with our colleagues serving now on the Commission's Montgomery County Planning Board to unequivocally oppose the General Assembly's consideration of SB 1005, ***Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations***. The Prince George's County Planning Board has not yet voted on a position for the bill.

The bill proposes a shocking reorganization of the Commission by chopping up most of its core administrative functions, creating a duplicative bureaucracy that would cost the taxpayers in the bi-county jurisdictions millions of dollars in the process. The agency's CORPORATE departments include Legal, Human Resources, Finance, Corporate Policy, Risk Management and the Inspector General's office that guards against fraud, waste and abuse. At a minimum, SB 1005 would create havoc within a national and local award-winning agency that has served the residents in Prince George's County and our region with national distinction for nearly a century.

The Commission currently operates with a business model that is designed to take excellent care of the operations in each county by leveraging specialized expertise. For example, a team of lawyers experienced in land use is assigned to each county planning staff, but they collaborate and cover for each other when staffing issues arise. Meanwhile, their supervision is coordinated and other bi-county (centralized) legal teams are specialized in construction contracts, human resources, litigation, etc. This hybrid model works exceptionally well and was praised by both the Prince George's and Montgomery County Councils in their joint study several years ago. Other Commission functions are organized in a comparable fashion – recruitment, information technology and a scandal-free procurement process, for example. It makes no sense to sever the functions as proposed by the bill. Duplicating them would be a huge step in the wrong direction that will result in nothing more than waste.

We also believe you must consider the best interest of more than 5,000 people who are currently depending on the Commission's unified pension system, including almost 2,000 retirees, beneficiaries or individuals who are disabled. Destroying the agency's cohesive structure that currently serves the entire agency will cost county taxpayers more money by disrupting the actuarial balance and fiduciary responsibilities that made the system successful to date.

In summary, SB 1005 represents a misguided attempt to fix something that isn't broken. We challenge you to identify another county government or agency in our region bestowed with more regional or national accolades or awards – awards in planning, parks and recreation, government budgeting, financial reporting, human resources as well as courtroom results. Please let us know. This 100-year-old agency has been a consistent nationwide leader supported by administrative teams with hard-working people who are dedicated to our mission and the people we serve.

Your constituents deserve an unfavorable vote on SB 1005.

Sincerely,

Charles Dukes, Former Chair
Elizabeth M. Hewlett, Former Chair
Samuel J. Parker, Jr., Former Chair
John H. Rhoades, Former Chair
Dorothy F. Bailey, Former Vice-Chair
Howard W. Stone, Jr., Former Vice Chair
Sarah A. Cavitt, Former Member
Jesse Clark, Former Member
William M. Dorner, Former Member
A. Shuanise Washington, Former Member

cc: Members of the Prince George's and Montgomery County Delegations
President, M-NCPPC Retirees Association

Written Testimony on SB 1005.pdf
Uploaded by: Heather Kerley
Position: UNF

Written Testimony on SB 1005 (Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations)

I am writing to ask that SB 1005 not be advanced. I am a Prince George's County resident and I do not understand why such a sweeping reorganization of the Planning Commission is necessary. It has been pushed forward at the last minute with hardly any explanation to county residents or public debate. There also seems to be concern from both Montgomery County and Prince George's former commissioners that the move would come at large cost to tax payers, potentially and would create less efficiency and more redundancy. Please set this bill aside until more debate and public transparency is available.

Sincerely,

Heather Kerley
3807 Idle Ct.
Bowie, MD 20715

20260324-SB1005-IDCrooms-Testimony.pdf
Uploaded by: Imara Crooms
Position: UNF

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,

Imara Crooms
District 9 Resident & Candidate for County Council

sb1005 pdf.pdf
Uploaded by: Jeff Zyontz
Position: UNF

Jeff Zyontz
5 Monterra Court
Rockville, Maryland 20850

March 24, 2026

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

From: Jeff Zyontz, Former Montgomery County Planning Board Chair

Subject: SB 1005

The Maryland Legislature had the wisdom to create the Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission 99 years ago. The Commission has served the residents of Montgomery County faithfully for all those years. It has been a nationally recognized leader in planning and park development. Those awards come from a dedicated, stable workforce with professional administration. Last-minute legislation to change administrative functions of such an agency is not justified.

The costs and complexities of SB 1005 are unknown. If there must be 2 contracts for the same IT software, it may cost more. Interesting, a County that wants to gain economies of scale may have costs imposed on it, if the other County's Board does not agree to the joint purchase. The complications of a single merit system and 2 independent Human Resource Offices is unknown.

I did not see any rationale for SB 1005 presented by the sponsors. Let me speculate as a distant observer. The budget constraints of TRIM (Tax Reform Initiative by Marylanders) have created a distorted incentive for Prince George's County. Since Park and Planning's budget is not limited by TRIM, there is an incentive to expand its budget as much as possible. Sometimes, there may be a legal objection to that expansion. Legal Counsel selected by a single County's Board, as proposed by SB 1005, may not raise any objection. Is that a sufficient reason to make a last-minute change?

The Montgomery County Planning Board was surprised by the Bill and objects to SB 1005's approval. Somehow, I am reminded of an old joke. Do you know how many psychiatrists it takes to change a light bulb. It only takes one…but the light bulb has to really really want to change. Without question, the Maryland legislature has the power to change the Commission….even without the Montgomery County Planning Board's consent. I hope the Senate Committee has the wisdom to reject SB 1005.

2026_SB1005_Testimony_01b.pdf
Uploaded by: Karyn Sonu or Kamita Gray
Position: UNF

SB1005

Maryland General Assembly – Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Brandywine TB Southern Region Neighborhood Coalition

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LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING:

CONSEQUENCES OF SB 1005

- **Bill:** SB 1005 – M-NCPPC General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations
  Position: UNFAVORABLE

IF SB 1005 PASSES, HERE IS WHAT HAPPENS

Consequence	What It Means
Loss of Independent Legal Counsel	Planning Board gets its own lawyers – appointed by and serving at the pleasure of a Board controlled by the County Executive. Lawyers who currently advise on zoning, development approvals, and environmental enforcement will answer to the same political network that has a documented history of developer-friendly decisions.
Regulatory Capture Codified	The County Executive's transition steering committee included developer lobbyists **Steve Proctor** (G.S. Proctor & Associates) and **Jim Soltez** (Soltez Group). They now sit at the table where planning lawyers are appointed to Taskforces. This bill makes that capture permanent.
Fiscal Waste & Duplication	Montgomery County Planning Board warns that splitting legal, HR, IT, and procurement will "cost millions of dollars each year" through duplication of services and loss of shared efficiencies. Taxpayers in both counties will pay more for less coordination.
Weakened Regional Coordination	M-NCPPC was created to plan across county lines. Decentralizing core functions will undermine regional transportation, environmental, and land-use planning – harming both counties but hitting Prince George's hardest because it loses the professional independence the agency was designed to provide.
Procedural Exclusion of Communities	The same political network that has historically limited public participation will now control the lawyers who advise on subdivision approvals, infrastructure waivers, and enforcement actions. Communities like Brandywine, Clinton, and Accokeek – already overburdened by industrial sites, coal-ash contamination, and flooding – will have even less ability to challenge developer-driven decisions.

Consequence	What It Means
Permanent Structural Imbalance	SB 1005 does nothing to fix the 3-to-5 commissioner imbalance between Prince George's and Montgomery counties. Instead, it gives Prince George's local political control over agency functions while leaving the structural inequity intact. True reform would equalize representation; this bill only consolidates power for the existing network.
Emboldens the Political Network	With lawyers, HR, and IT under direct local control, the same "in-group" documented in *Black Power in the Suburbs* (Blue Ribbon slates, Democratic Central Committee, developer-aligned officials) will have no independent check. Future corruption or favoritism will be harder to detect and challenge.
Sets a Dangerous Precedent	If one county can dismantle the independent structure of a bi-county agency for its own political purposes, other regional agencies (WSSC, etc.) could be similarly targeted. The 99-year-old model of professional planning would be undermined statewide.

KEY SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

- **Montgomery County Planning Board opposes** – warns bill "would effectively dismantle the Commission" and "cost millions."
- **2003 Ehrlich veto** – Governor vetoed a similar bill, stating: "The politicizing of such a critical planning body… is at once unhealthy and wholly unnecessary."
- **Historical documentation** – *Black Power in the Suburbs* (SUNY Press, 2002) details the political network that has controlled Prince George's development for generations.
- **Procedural anomaly** – hearing scheduled three days after Crossover Day, limiting public scrutiny.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Vote UNFAVORABLE** in committee.
- **Reject the bill** on the Senate floor if it advances.
- **Require an equity impact analysis** before any future legislation affecting M-NCPPC.
- **Investigate the role** of developer lobbyists in drafting and sponsoring SB 1005.

This bill is not modernization. It is a takeover. Protect M-NCPPC independence.

Vote UNFAVORABLE.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

- **SB 1005 – Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission – General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards (Alterations)**
- **Date:** March 24, 2026
  Position: UNFAVORABLE
  Sponsors: Prince George's County Senators
  Committee: Education, Energy, and Environment
  Hearing: March 26, 2026, 1:00 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- SB 1005 is not a routine modernization bill. It is a coordinated effort by a long-standing political network to dismantle the structural independence of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). The bill would give the Prince George's County Planning Board (appointed by the County Executive) direct control over its own legal counsel, human resources, information technology, and procurement—functions currently managed regionally to ensure professional independence.
- The agency was created in 1927 to remove land-use decisions from local political influence. The bill would undo that firewall and place planning lawyers under the control of the same political network documented for generations in *Black Power in the Suburbs*—a network that includes developer lobbyists now sitting on the County Executive's transition steering committee.

Key facts:

- **M-NCPPC created 1927** – bi-county, professional, staggered terms to insulate planning from politics.
- **Sasscer machine & Baggett convictions (1930s–1960s)** – documented zoning corruption, including County Council Chair Jesse Baggett imprisoned for taking money for zoning favors.
- **"In-group" & Blue Ribbon slates** – after home rule (1970), a new political network controlled candidate selection and campaign funds.

- **Braveboy transition steering committee** – includes developer lobbyists **Steve Proctor** and **Jim Soltez**, Senator C. Anthony Muse, and then-Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk (now Speaker of the House).
- **Appointment chain** – Senator Michael Jackson resigned (Nov 2025); Governor Moore appointed Kevin Harris (Dec 2025); two months later, Harris and Muse introduced SB 1005.
- **Montgomery County Planning Board opposes** – warns bill would "effectively dismantle the Commission," cost millions, and weaken regional coordination.
- **2003 Ehrlich veto** – Governor Ehrlich vetoed a similar bill, warning against "politicizing such a critical planning body."
- **Procedural anomaly** – hearing scheduled **three days after Crossover Day**, limiting scrutiny.
- **Voter turnout** – only **15% - 18%** of registered voters participated in the 2024 Democratic primary that elected Braveboy, emboldening the network.

WHAT SB 1005 DOES

Section	Current Law	SB 1005
General Counsel	M-NCPPC Commission appoints single General Counsel	Each County Planning Board appoints its own legal counsel
HR, IT, Legal Services	Commission has regional authority	Each Planning Board exercises direct authority
Shared Services	Not specified	Permitted only with approval of both boards

What the bill does NOT do:

- Give Prince George's County equal representation (still 3-to-5 commissioner imbalance).
- Require equity impact analysis or public participation safeguards.
- Protect against political influence over legal counsel.

- **The real effect:** Moves legal and administrative functions from a regional professional agency to a local board appointed by a County Executive whose transition team includes developer lobbyists.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT – WHY THIS MATTERS

- **1. The agency was created to separate planning from politics.**
  In 1927, the General Assembly created M-NCPPC with staggered terms and professional staff to insulate land-use decisions from local political pressure. The goal was to prevent the kind of corruption that plagued the region.

- **2. Corruption still happened – because the machine captured the agency.**
  From the 1930s through the 1960s, the **Sasscer machine** controlled zoning in exchange for favors. In the late 1960s, **County Council Chair Jesse Baggett** was convicted for taking money for zoning favors (along with Spiro Agnew). The corruption did not occur *outside* M-NCPPC; it occurred *through* it because the same political forces controlled appointments.

- **3. The network evolved, but did not disappear.**
  After home rule (1970), a new "in-group" emerged – attorneys, party leaders, and the Democratic Central Committee. They created **Blue Ribbon slates** to select candidates; those not on the slate "face formidable odds" raising campaign resources. "Grandchildren slates" still operate today. (Source: *Black Power in the Suburbs*, SUNY Press, 2002)

- **4. The current network is now pushing SB 1005.**

  - **Aisha Braveboy's transition steering committee** included developer lobbyists **Steve Proctor**(G.S. Proctor & Associates) and **Jim Soltez** (Soltez Group), along with Senator C. Anthony Muse and then-Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk (now Speaker of the House).

  - **Senator Michael Jackson** resigned in November 2025; Governor Moore appointed **Kevin Harris** to fill the seat. Two months later, Harris and Muse introduced SB 1005.

  - **Speaker Adrienne Jones** stepped down in fall 2025; **Joseline Peña-Melnyk** (Braveboy steering committee member) became Speaker – giving the network control of the House agenda.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY OPPOSITION – A KEY SIGNAL

- **Montgomery County Planning Board (March 12, 2026):**

- "SB 1005 would effectively dismantle the Commission by decentralizing legal, financial, and other administrative services… This would increase fragmentation and force Montgomery County to duplicate administrative, technical, and operational functions now shared with Prince George's County. This loss of efficiency could cost millions of dollars each year, while weakening regional coordination."

- If this bill were truly about "modernization," why does Montgomery County—which also has the same bi-county structure—oppose it?

THE 2003 EHRLICH VETO – A WARNING

- In 2003, Governor Robert Ehrlich vetoed **House Bill 865**, which would have altered terms of M-NCPPC commissioners to coincide with the Prince George's County Executive's term.

Ehrlich wrote:

- "The politicizing of such a critical planning body in the regulation of land use is at once unhealthy and wholly unnecessary… All known precepts of land use planning envision that said decisions be made on the merits without political influence, engendering public confidence in the decisions made through that process."
- SB 1005 is House Bill 865 reborn—only more sweeping, as it would give the Planning Board control over legal counsel and administration.

PROCEDURAL ANOMALY – HEARING AFTER CROSSOVER DAY

- **Crossover Day:** March 23, 2026
  SB 1005 Hearing: March 26, 2026 (three days after)
- Bills introduced in February typically receive hearings well before Crossover Day. The post-crossover hearing reduces the likelihood of thorough committee scrutiny and signals that sponsors are slow-walking the bill to avoid public attention.

VOTER TURNOUT – WHY THE NETWORK FEARS NO CONSEQUENCES

  - **Registered voters in Prince George's County:** 627,123 (while the official special-primary eligible voter count was 502,805 with 94,537 Democratic votes cast).
  - **Votes cast in 2024 Democratic primary for County Executive:** 94,537
  - **Turnout: 15%**
- The network does not need to win over the community; it only needs to mobilize its small, organized base. That is why they are not afraid of public outcry—but they do fear organized opposition at hearings, phone calls, and primary elections.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

For the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

1. **Vote UNFAVORABLE on SB 1005.**
2. **Require a full equity impact analysis** before any legislation affecting M-NCPPC moves forward.
3. **Schedule additional public hearings** to allow community input before any potential floor vote.
4. **Investigate the role of developer lobbyists** in drafting and sponsoring the bill.

CONCLUSION

- SB 1005 is a power grab by a political network that has controlled development in Prince George's County for generations. It would dismantle the independent structure of M-NCPPC—an agency created specifically to keep planning out of politics—and hand its lawyers to the same network that includes developer lobbyists.
- The Montgomery County Planning Board opposes it. Governor Ehrlich vetoed a similar bill. The historical record documents the corruption that occurs when planning is politicized.

Stop SB 1005. Protect the independence of M-NCPPC.

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 1005

Preserving the Historical Record for Future Generations

TO: Maryland General Assembly – Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
FROM: Concerned Residents of Prince George's County
RE: SB 1005 – Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations
POSITION: UNFAVORABLE
DATE: March 24, 2026

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SB 1005 is not a routine modernization bill. It is a coordinated effort by a political network to dismantle the structural independence of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), an agency created in 1927 to separate land-use decisions from local political influence.

This testimony preserves the historical record for future generations. It documents:

1. **The 1927 Origins:** M-NCPPC was created by the Maryland General Assembly as a bi-county agency with independent authority over planning and parks. The 1927 Act was designed to remove land-use decisions from the control of local politicians and place them in the hands of professional planners.

2. **The Sasscer Machine and Baggett Corruption (1930s–1960s):** Despite the creation of M-NCPPC, a political machine led by Lansdale Sasscer controlled Prince George's County for decades. In the late 1960s, County Council Chair Jesse Baggett was convicted for taking money in exchange for zoning favors—along with Spiro Agnew. This corruption occurred not outside M-NCPPC, but through it.

3. **The "In-Group" and Blue Ribbon Slates:** After the machine fell, a new political structure emerged. The Democratic Central Committee became "a government within a

government." The Blue Ribbon slates selected candidates for office. Candidates who did not receive slate support "face formidable odds" raising campaign resources. This network continues today.

4. **The Braveboy Transition Network:** In June 2025, Aisha Braveboy became County Executive. Her transition steering committee included developer lobbyists Steve Proctor and Jim Soltez, as well as Senator C. Anthony Muse and then-Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk (now Speaker of the House).

5. **The Appointment Chain:** Senator Michael Jackson resigned in November 2025. Governor Moore appointed Kevin M. Harris to fill the seat in December 2025. Two months later, Harris and Muse introduced SB 1005.

6. **The 2003 Ehrlich Veto:** In 2003, Governor Robert Ehrlich vetoed a similar bill that would have given the Prince George's County Executive more control over M-NCPPC commissioners. Ehrlich warned that "politicizing such a critical planning body in the regulation of land use is at once unhealthy and wholly unnecessary."

7. **Montgomery County Opposition:** The Montgomery County Planning Board strongly opposes SB 1005, warning that it would "effectively dismantle the Commission" and "cost millions of dollars each year, while weakening regional coordination."

8. **Low Voter Turnout:** Only 94,537 of over 627,000 registered voters participated in the 2024 Democratic primary that elected Braveboy—just 15%. This low turnout emboldens the political network to act without fear of electoral consequences.

SB 1005 must be stopped. The agency created to separate planning from politics must remain independent. This testimony is submitted to preserve the historical record for future generations, regardless of the outcome of this legislative session.

II. THE 1927 CREATION OF M-NCPPC: A HISTORICAL EXAMINATION

A. The Legislative Origins

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1927 (Chapter 448, Acts of 1927). It was established as a bi-county agency serving Montgomery and Prince George's counties, which together form the Maryland-Washington Metropolitan District.

The Commission was given specific powers:

- To acquire, develop, maintain, and operate a regional system of parks
- To prepare and administer a General Plan for the physical development of the region

- To make zoning recommendations to county councils
- To approve subdivisions, location and grades of streets, location of public buildings and utilities, and street naming and house numbering
- To exercise exclusive responsibility for subdivision approval

B. The Structure: 5 and 3

The original 1927 Act created a Commission with five commissioners from Montgomery County and three from Prince George's County. This imbalance was not an accident. It was designed by an all-white, segregationist General Assembly to ensure that the whiter, wealthier county would control regional planning.

Today, the structure has changed. Under current law, the Commission has ten members—five from each county—who serve four-year terms. The five members from each county make up that jurisdiction's planning board.

Current appointment process:

- **Montgomery County:** Members are appointed by the County Council and confirmed by the County Executive
- **Prince George's County:** Members are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council

Current leadership: The Commission appoints the executive director, general counsel, and secretary-treasurer. In Prince George's County, the parks and recreation director and planning director are appointed by the county planning board.

C. The Purpose: Removing Planning from Politics

The 1927 Act was a response to the chaotic, politically driven development that plagued the region in the early 20th century. Its architects understood that land-use decisions should be based on sound planning principles, not campaign contributions or political favors.

The Commission was designed as a **professional, independent body** with staff appointed based on merit, not political loyalty. The staggered terms of commissioners—four years, overlapping—were intended to "moderate the potential for direct political control" and "preserve some measure of institutional memory".

As Governor Robert Ehrlich noted in his 2003 veto message of a bill that would have altered the Commission's structure:

"The Maryland General Assembly created the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (a quasi-judicial agency) in 1927 to acquire, develop, maintain, and administer a

regional system of parks in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. As an independent entity, the commission has taxing and decision-making authority on developmental and open space issues."

"All known precepts of land use planning envision that said decisions be made on the merits without political influence, engendering public confidence in the decisions made through that process. Indeed, the politicizing of such a critical planning body in the regulation of land use is at once unhealthy and wholly unnecessary."

SB 1005 DISMANTLES THIS 99-YEAR-OLD FIREWALL.

III. THE SASSCER MACHINE AND THE BAGGETT CORRUPTION (1930S–1960S)

A. The Sasscer Machine

Despite the creation of M-NCPPC in 1927, a political machine controlled Prince George's County for decades. **Lansdale T. Sasscer** led this machine from 1934 to 1962. He was a state senator and president of the state senate.

According to *Black Power in the Suburbs* by Valerie C. Johnson (SUNY Press, 2002):

"This machine, led by then-state senator and president of the state senate, Lansdale T. Sasscer, from 1934 to 1962, was largely funded by T. Howard Ducker, founder of Suburban Trust Company, and 'was based on favoritism; Sasscer supported the bank and its borrowers, and they supported him.'"

The Sasscer machine:

- Controlled zoning and development approvals
- Operated through personal relationships, not public process
- Survived on low voter turnout and political indifference
- Used M-NCPPC as a tool to reward developers

B. The Baggett Convictions

In the late 1960s, a corruption investigation centered on officials in Prince George's County government for organized gambling, bribery, and illegal zoning practices.

Jesse S. Baggette (Baggett), a County Commissioner (later County Council Chair), was convicted of collecting money in exchange for zoning favors. Along with Baggett, the investigation ensnared:

- Spiro Agnew (then-Governor, former Baltimore County Executive)
- George J. Panagoulis (Prince George's Chief of Police)
- Frank J. Lastner (County Commissioner)
- Roger D. Rocks (president of Rocks Engineering Company)
- William L. Kahler (zoning attorney)
- John J. McBurney (Chairman of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission)
- J. Dudley Digges (Chief Judge of Maryland's 7th Judicial Circuit)

All except Spiro Agnew were imprisoned.

The investigation was led by Larry Hogan (father of former Governor Larry Hogan), who worked as a part-time editor and corruption investigator. Hogan was writing a book about his investigations titled "Politicians Versus the People".

C. What This History Teaches Us

The Sasscer machine and Baggett convictions demonstrate that M-NCPPC did not prevent corruption. Why?

Because the same political forces that controlled the county also controlled the Commission. The machine did not operate *outside* M-NCPPC. It operated *through* it. The machine controlled appointments. It controlled the Democratic Central Committee. It controlled the party purse. And it used the Commission as a tool to reward developers and maintain power.

The lesson is not that M-NCPPC is useless. The lesson is that when political networks capture independent agencies, the agencies fail. The solution is not to dismantle the agencies. The solution is to strengthen their independence.

IV. THE 1970 HOME RULE CHARTER AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE "IN-GROUP"

A. Home Rule

In 1970, Prince George's County adopted a home rule charter. This fundamentally changed the structure of county government.

Before 1970, the county was an "instrument of state administration"—controlled by the same political networks that had run it since the 1930s. After home rule, the county gained an elected county executive and county council.

The reform movement that led to home rule was "led by nonpartisan neighborhood associations, good government leagues, service clubs, and groups such as the League of Women Voters". The reformers:

- Exposed inefficiencies throughout the court system
- Defeated many members of the Sasscer organization in the 1962 and 1964 primaries
- Benefited from court-ordered reapportionment in 1966
- Achieved home rule in 1970

B. The "In-Group" Emerges

But as *Black Power in the Suburbs* documents, "insider politics continued its tradition under the guise of a different leadership."

"Although the reform movement eliminated the rule of the old and more conservative Sasscer organization, 'insider' politics continued its tradition under the guise of a different leadership. Unlike the previous machine, however, county politics resembled a club system or, as described by George Callcott (1985), 'an alliance of the in-group which bore resemblance to a revived organization.'"

Key figures in the new "in-group" included:

- Peter F. O'Malley (attorney), who "presided over and brokered compromises within the new organization"
- Steny H. Hoyer (later U.S. Congressman)
- Gladys Noon Spelman (county council member)
- Francis B. Francois (county council member)
- Meyer (Marty) Emanuel (state senator)

C. The Democratic Central Committee

Central to the power of the "in-group" was the Democratic Central Committee, which acted as "a government within a government."

According to *Black Power in the Suburbs*:

"The Democratic Central Committee, which consisted of elected party officials from each district, filled vacancies, controlled the party purse, and advised county officials, the General Assembly, and the governor, especially on matters of patronage positions."

This structure—the Central Committee, the slate-making, the closed-door meetings, the patronage appointments—is the political network that now controls Prince George's County and is advancing SB 1005.

V. THE BLUE RIBBON SLATES AND DEMOCRATIC CENTRAL COMMITTEE

A. The Blue Ribbon Slates

In 1974, State Senator Steny Hoyer and attorney Peter F. O'Malley created the "Blue Ribbon slate" for every office in the county.

According to *Black Power in the Suburbs*:

"Neither the Blue Ribbon slate nor the Blue Ribbon Selection Committee that organized the slate are in existence today. However, 'grandchildren slates,' as they are called, continue to wield influence in county elections by providing essential campaign resources for candidates."

The Blue Ribbon slate's success rate: In 1974, the slate contained seventy candidates running for various offices. **Of those seventy candidates, only three lost their bids for election.**

B. How the Slate System Works

The slate system operates as follows:

1. A small group of party leaders selects candidates for office
2. Those candidates receive party funding and organizational support
3. Candidates who do not receive slate support "face formidable odds" raising campaign resources
4. Developers contribute to slate-approved candidates
5. Zoning and development favors flow back to developers

According to *Black Power in the Suburbs*:

"The success of both African-American and white members supported by the slate-making system is largely the result of the Central Committee's ability to raise considerable funds for its members, to garner support for the slate throughout its respective districts, and to hold voter education and registration drives in each district. Candidates who do not receive the support of the slate face formidable odds and typically have a difficult time raising the type of campaign resources afforded to candidates who have the blessing of the slate."

C. The Breakfast Club

The "in-group" held closed meetings every Monday morning at the Breakfast Club. According to *Black Power in the Suburbs*:

"The Breakfast Club served as a forum for closed meetings of the 'in-group' every Monday morning. The Breakfast Club met the same fate of the Blue Ribbon slate and has fallen by the wayside. The main criticism of the Breakfast Club was its resemblance to the proverbial closed-door meetings of early political machines."

The book notes that while the Breakfast Club no longer exists, "informal meetings have taken the place of the Breakfast Club."

D. Term Limits

In 1992, Prince George's County voters imposed term limits on county officials. According to *Black Power in the Suburbs*:

"Several African-American elected officials who were interviewed for this book indicated that the push for term limits was a calculated effort to limit the potential power of dominant actors in the African-American community. According to this reasoning, if an election resulted in the victory of someone who was out of step with the governing coalition, term limits could effectively limit his or her longevity in office."

VI. THE BRAVEBOY TRANSITION NETWORK: DEVELOPERS, LOBBYISTS, AND THE STEERING COMMITTEE

A. The 2024 Primary Election

On June 19, 2025, Aisha Braveboy was sworn in as Prince George's County Executive. She won the 2024 Democratic primary with 46.48% of the vote.

Official primary results:

- Aisha Braveboy: 43,942 votes (46.48%)
- Rushern L. Baker, III: 18,270 votes (19.33%)
- Calvin S. Hawkins, Jr.: 16,180 votes (17.11%)
- Jolene Ivey: 8,374 votes (8.86%)
- Alonzo T. Washington: 4,952 votes (5.24%)
- Others: 2,819 votes (2.98%)

Total votes cast: 94,537

B. The Transition Steering Committee

Braveboy's transition steering committee included the following individuals:

Name	Role	Relevance
C. Anthony Muse	State Senator (District 26)	Sponsor of SB 1005
Joseline Peña-Melnyk	Delegate (later Speaker of the House)	Controls House agenda
Erek Barron	Former State's Attorney	Key ally
Donna Christie	Unknown	Network insider
Dr. Darryll Pines	President, University of Maryland	Institutional power
Eben Smith	Unknown	Network insider
Haitham Hijazi	Unknown	Network insider
Jim Soltez	Developer lobbyist, Soltez Group	Represents developers
Sam Epps	Unknown	Network insider
Steve Proctor	Developer lobbyist, G.S. Proctor & Associates	Represents developers; specializes in zoning and land use
Melony Griffith	President & CEO, Maryland Hospital Association	Network insider
Vincent Harrington	Unknown	Network insider

C. What This Steering Committee Represents

This steering committee is not a neutral group of advisors. It includes:

1. **Two developer lobbyists** (Steve Proctor and Jim Soltez) whose firms specialize in zoning approvals and land-use representation
2. **A State Senator** (C. Anthony Muse) who would later sponsor SB 1005
3. **A Delegate** (Joseline Peña-Melnyk) who would later become Speaker of the House
4. **The County Executive** (Aisha Braveboy) who appoints the Planning Board

This network—the "in-group" documented in *Black Power in the Suburbs*—now controls the county government and is advancing SB 1005.

VII. THE APPOINTMENT CHAIN: JACKSON RESIGNS, HARRIS APPOINTED

A. Senator Michael Jackson Resigns

In November 2025, Senator Michael A. Jackson (District 27) resigned from the Maryland Senate to become Superintendent of the Maryland State Police.

Jackson had served in the Senate since 2015. His resignation created a vacancy in District 27—a district that includes parts of Prince George's County.

B. Governor Moore Appoints Kevin M. Harris

In December 2025, Governor Wes Moore appointed Kevin M. Harris to fill the vacant District 27 Senate seat. Harris was previously a Delegate from District 27A.

The appointment was made through the standard process: the Governor selects a replacement, who serves until the next election.

C. The Timing

Two months after Harris's appointment—in February 2026—SB 1005 was introduced by "Prince George's County Senators," including C. Anthony Muse (District 26) and Kevin M. Harris (District 27).

This timeline demonstrates the patronage system documented in *Black Power in the Suburbs*:

"The Democratic Central Committee... fills vacancies, controls the party purse, and advises county officials, the General Assembly, and the governor, especially on matters of patronage positions."

A vacancy opens. A loyalist is appointed. A bill is introduced that benefits the network.

VIII. THE SPEAKER TRANSITION: JONES STEPS DOWN, PEÑA-MELNYK RISES

A. Speaker Adrienne Jones Steps Down

In fall 2025, Speaker of the House Adrienne Jones stepped down. The circumstances of her departure have not been fully explained, but the timing is significant.

B. Joseline Peña-Melnyk Becomes Speaker

Joseline Peña-Melnyk—a member of Aisha Braveboy's transition steering committee—was appointed to replace Jones as Speaker of the House.

Peña-Melnyk had served as a Delegate from Prince George's County. Her appointment to the Speaker's chair puts a Braveboy insider in control of the House agenda.

C. What This Means for SB 1005

If SB 1005 passes the Senate, it goes to the House of Delegates. The House is led by a Speaker who was on Braveboy's steering committee—the same network that is pushing this bill.

This is not a coincidence. It is a coordinated transfer of power.

IX. SB 1005: WHAT THE BILL ACTUALLY DOES

A. Summary of the Bill

SB 1005 makes the following changes to Maryland law:

Section	Current Law	SB 1005
General Counsel	M-NCPPC Commission appoints a single General Counsel (Land Use §15-109)	Each County Planning Board appoints its own legal counsel for operations within its county

Section	Current Law	SB 1005
HR, IT, Legal Services	Commission has regional authority	Each Planning Board exercises "direct authority" over these functions
Shared Services	Not specified	Permitted only with approval of both Planning Boards
Administrative Functions	Commission appoints executive director, secretary-treasurer, and general counsel	Each county board directs its own administrative functions

B. What the Bill Does NOT Do

The bill does NOT:

- Address the commissioner imbalance between Montgomery and Prince George's counties
- Require equity impact analysis
- **Include public participation requirements**
- **Protect against political influence over legal counsel**
- Reform the Commission's structure
- Provide any mechanism for community oversight

C. The Real Effect

The bill is presented as "modernization" and "efficiency." But the real effect is to **move legal authority from a regional commission to a local board appointed by the County Executive.**

The County Executive's transition team includes developer lobbyists. The Planning Board is appointed by that County Executive. SB 1005 gives that Board control over its own lawyers.

The lawyers who currently advise on zoning, development approvals, and environmental enforcement will now answer to a board that is politically aligned with the developers who seek approvals.

This is regulatory capture codified into law.

X. THE DEVELOPER LOBBYISTS: STEVE PROCTOR AND JIM SOLTEZ

A. Steve Proctor – G.S. Proctor & Associates

Steve Proctor founded G.S. Proctor & Associates in 1995. The firm is consistently ranked among the Top 10 lobbying firms in Maryland.

Core practice areas:

- **Land Growth and Development:** "Representation before local government officials on development and zoning matters"
- **Local Government Relations:** "Assist in matters ranging from planning, zoning and economic development"
- **Drafting of legislation or amendments:** "Position clients to win contracts from state agencies"
- **Direct lobbying:** "With elected and appointed officials throughout Maryland"

The firm's website states:

"We develop and maintain relationships with elected officials and their staffs throughout Maryland. We're connected at every level of federal, state and local government, and we're ready to put those relationships to work for you."

Steve Proctor sat on Aisha Braveboy's transition steering committee.

B. Jim Soltez – Soltez Group

Jim Soltez is a land-use consultant and developer representative. His firm specializes in:

- Zoning and land-use approvals
- Development permitting
- Representation before planning boards and county councils

Jim Soltez also sat on Aisha Braveboy's transition steering committee.

C. The ICSC Connection

In 2024, Proctor and his firm were in Las Vegas at ICSC—the International Council of Shopping Centers, the premier trade organization for commercial real estate and development. They hosted events with the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation (PGCEDC) and Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller.

These events are where developers, lobbyists, and government officials network and make deals.

XI. MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD OPPOSITION

A. Formal Statement of Opposition

On March 12, 2026, the Montgomery County Planning Board issued a formal statement opposing SB 1005.

The statement reads in full:

"The Montgomery Planning Board strongly opposes this bill and any attempt to undermine the work we are doing on behalf of Montgomery County and the bi-county region. SB 1005 would effectively dismantle the Commission by decentralizing legal, financial, and other administrative services that depend on coordinated bi-county operations and shift those authorities to the planning boards in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. This would increase fragmentation and force Montgomery County to duplicate administrative, technical, and operational functions now shared with Prince George's County. This loss of efficiency could cost millions of dollars each year, while weakening regional coordination on land use, transportation, parks, and environmental planning. This legislation will only come at the expense of Montgomery County taxpayers during a very tough budget year."

B. Procedural Concerns

The Montgomery Planning Board also noted:

"This bill was filed incredibly late in the General Assembly session, limiting the Board's or the Commission's ability to comprehensively assess its implications or understand its intent. It represents a fundamental attempt to change how we work and could result in significant disruptions to the parks and planning services our community relies on every day. In addition to the communities we serve, this bill could have long-term impacts on staff and our retirees."

C. No Prior Engagement

The statement emphasizes:

"SB1005 was introduced without any prior engagement with the Montgomery County Planning Board and provides no clarity as to why such a substantial change is needed or how this will benefit our residents."

D. The Significance

If this bill were truly about "modernization" and "efficiency," why does the Montgomery County Planning Board oppose it? Why do they warn that it would "effectively dismantle the Commission" and "cost millions of dollars each year"?

Because they understand what is at stake: the independence of the agency created to separate planning from politics.

XII. THE 2003 EHRLICH VETO: A WARNING IGNORED

A. House Bill 865 (2003)

In 2003, the Maryland General Assembly passed House Bill 865, which would have altered the terms of office for M-NCPPC commissioners from Prince George's County to coincide with the term of the County Executive.

The bill would have:

- Eliminated staggered terms for Prince George's County commissioners
- Removed current members and created new four-year terms
- Expanded conflict-of-interest provisions

B. Governor Ehrlich's Veto Message

Governor Robert Ehrlich vetoed the bill. His veto message is a prescient warning about the dangers of politicizing the Commission.

Ehrlich wrote:

"Although the ostensible purpose of the legislation is to make those members of the commission more accountable to the Prince George's County Executive, that goal runs afoul of the well-established checks and balances upon which this great nation was founded. Moreover, this concept conflicts with important policies of this State which favor providing quasi-judicial tribunals enough independence to render sound legal decisions in accordance with local regulations and the law of this State."

"All known precepts of land use planning envision that said decisions be made on the merits without political influence, engendering public confidence in the decisions made through that process. Indeed, the politicizing of such a critical planning body in the regulation of land use is at once unhealthy and wholly unnecessary, a result that is especially troubling because M-NCCPC is chartered as an agency of the State of Maryland to protect a region-wide interest in the ordered development of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties."

C. The Staggered Terms Argument

Ehrlich also addressed the importance of staggered terms:

"Perhaps the most glaring flaw in House Bill 865 is the extent to which it departs from the mainstream of modern government. Since the advent of public land use regulation during the 1920s and 1930s, planning commissions have been structured throughout the United States with staggered terms, not only to moderate the potential for direct political control, but also to preserve some measure of institutional memory and provide a stable body that survives the ebb and flow of election cycles."

D. Relevance to SB 1005

Ehrlich's veto message is directly relevant to SB 1005. Both bills seek to increase political control over the Commission. Both bills threaten the independence of the agency.

SB 1005 is House Bill 865—reborn.

XIII. THE HEARING AFTER CROSSOVER DAY: A PROCEDURAL ANOMALY

A. Crossover Day Rules

Crossover Day is the last day of the Maryland General Assembly session when a bill can pass and is guaranteed a hearing in the opposite chamber. In 2026, Crossover Day was March 23.

As reported by the Maryland Daily Record:

"Crossover Day marks the last of the 90-day legislative session when a bill can pass and is guaranteed a hearing in the opposite chamber. Although bills can still be approved if they hit that mark after Crossover Day, their chance of making it to Gov. Wes Moore's desk is much smaller."

B. SB 1005's Hearing Date

SB 1005 was introduced on February 24, 2026. Its hearing is scheduled for **March 26, 2026—three days after Crossover Day.**

This is a procedural anomaly. The bill was introduced nearly a month before Crossover Day. Why was the hearing delayed until after the deadline?

C. Possible Explanations

The post-crossover hearing could indicate:

1. The sponsors are slow-walking the bill to avoid scrutiny
2. The committee was reluctant to schedule the hearing—indicating internal opposition
3. The sponsors want the bill to die quietly after the public has moved on

Regardless of the explanation, the post-crossover hearing is a red flag. If this bill were routine and uncontroversial, it would have been heard weeks ago.

XIV. VOTER TURNOUT: WHY THEY ARE NOT SCARED OF OUR VOTING

A. The 2024 Primary Numbers

Total registered voters in Prince George's County: Over 627,000
Total votes cast in the Democratic primary for County Executive: 94,537
Turnout: Less than 16%

Eighty-four percent of registered voters did not participate in the election that decided who would run this county.

B. What This Means

The political network does not need to win over the community. They need to win over the small, organized, loyal minority who actually show up to vote in the primary.

Who shows up?

- The network
- The developer lobbyists
- The slate-makers
- The Democratic Central Committee

Who does not show up?

- The residents of Brandywine, Clinton, Accokeek, and District VII
- The communities most affected by industrial siting, coal-ash contamination, and failing infrastructure

C. The Alonzo Washington Example

Alonzo T. Washington received 4,952 votes in the 2024 primary—just 5.24% of the total. He is now a State Senator sponsoring SB 1005.

If the communities of Brandywine, Clinton, Accokeek, and District VII had shown up—just a few thousand more votes—the entire map could have changed.

But they did not show up.

D. The Lesson

Low voter turnout is not democracy. It is abdication. And the network is counting on us to keep abdicating.

SB 1005 is the result of 15% turnout.

XV. CONCLUSION AND REQUESTED ACTION

A. Summary of Findings

SB 1005 is not a routine modernization bill. The evidence demonstrates:

1. **Historical pattern:** From the Sasscer machine to the Baggett convictions to the "in-group" documented in *Black Power in the Suburbs*, Prince George's County has a documented history of political control over development.
2. **The Braveboy network:** The County Executive's transition steering committee included developer lobbyists and the very senators who now sponsor SB 1005.
3. **Coordinated appointments:** Senator Jackson resigned. Kevin Harris was appointed. Two months later, SB 1005 was introduced.
4. **Speaker transition:** Joseline Peña-Melnyk—a member of Braveboy's steering committee—became Speaker of the House.
5. **Montgomery County opposition:** The Montgomery County Planning Board strongly opposes SB 1005, warning that it would "effectively dismantle the Commission."
6. **The Ehrlich veto:** In 2003, Governor Ehrlich vetoed a similar bill, warning against "politicizing such a critical planning body."
7. **Procedural anomaly:** The hearing is scheduled after Crossover Day—a clear attempt to reduce scrutiny.
8. **Low voter turnout:** Only 15% of registered voters participated in the 2024 primary, emboldening the network.

B. Requested Action

We respectfully request that the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

1. **Vote UNFAVORABLE on SB 1005.**
2. **Schedule a full public hearing** with adequate notice and opportunity for community testimony.
3. **Require an equity impact analysis** before any further consideration of legislation affecting M-NCPPC.
4. **Investigate the role of developer lobbyists** in the drafting and sponsorship of this bill.
5. **Preserve this testimony in the legislative record** for future reference, regardless of the outcome of this session.

C. Final Statement

The agency created in 1927 to separate planning from politics must remain independent. SB 1005 dismantles that independence and hands planning lawyers to the same political network that has put developers first for generations.

Stop SB 1005. Protect M-NCPPC. Protect our communities.

XVI. APPENDIX: KEY NAMES, CONTACT INFORMATION, AND SOURCE MATERIALS

A. Prince George's County Senators

Name	District	Email	Phone
Cory V. McCray	45th	cory.mccray@senate.state.maryland.gov	410-841-3165
Malcolm L. Augustine	47th	malcolm.augustine@senate.state.maryland.gov	410-841-3695
C. Anthony Muse	26th	anthony.muse@senate.state.maryland.gov	410-841-3620
Alonzo T. Washington	22nd	alonzo.washington@senate.state.maryland.gov	410-841-3630
Kevin M. Harris	27th	kevin.harris@senate.state.maryland.gov	410-841-3654
Pamela G. Beidle	32nd	pam.beidle@senate.state.maryland.gov	410-841-3675

B. Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Name	District	Email
Brian J. Feldman (Chair)	15	brian.feldman@senate.state.maryland.gov

Name	District	Email
Katie Fry Hester (Vice Chair)	9	katiefry.hester@senate.state.maryland.gov
Malcolm L. Augustine	47	malcolm.augustine@senate.state.maryland.gov
Pamela G. Beidle	32	pam.beidle@senate.state.maryland.gov
Benjamin Brooks	10	benjamin.brooks@senate.state.maryland.gov
Jill P. Carter	41	jill.carter@senate.state.maryland.gov
Arthur Ellis	28	arthur.ellis@senate.state.maryland.gov
Shelly Hettleman	11	shelly.hettleman@senate.state.maryland.gov
Stephen S. Hershey Jr.	36	stephen.hershey@senate.state.maryland.gov
Mary-Dulany James	34	marydulany.james@senate.state.maryland.gov
Cheryl C. Kagan	17	cheryl.kagan@senate.state.maryland.gov
Michael J. McKay	1	michael.mckay@senate.state.maryland.gov
Charles E. Sydnor III	44	charles.sydnor@senate.state.maryland.gov
Chris West	42	chris.west@senate.state.maryland.gov

C. Key References

- Johnson, Valerie C. *Black Power in the Suburbs: The Myth or Reality of African-American Suburban Political Incorporation*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.
- Cumberland, John H. *A Study of Development Practices in Prince George's County, Maryland*. 1967.
- *Gray v. Prince George's County* (pending litigation on stormwater failures approved by MNCPP-C)

- EPA Title VI Complaint Docket No. 03RA-25-R3 (Maryland Department of the Environment)
- Maryland State Archives. "Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission." Maryland Manual On-Line.
- Montgomery County Planning Board. "Montgomery Planning Board strongly opposes State bill SB1005." March 12, 2026.
- University of Maryland Libraries. "Larry Hogan Associates, Inc., 1959-1974." Special Collections and University Archives.
- Governor Robert Ehrlich. Veto Message, House Bill 865. May 21, 2003.

D. Source Materials for Future Researchers

This testimony is submitted to preserve the historical record. The following source materials are recommended for future researchers:

1. *Black Power in the Suburbs* by Valerie C. Johnson (SUNY Press, 2002)
2. The Larry Hogan Associates files at the University of Maryland Special Collections
3. The Maryland State Archives Manual on M-NCPPC
4. Governor Ehrlich's 2003 veto message
5. The Montgomery County Planning Board's formal opposition statement
6. The 2025 EPA Title VI Complaint Docket No. 03RA-25-R3

Submitted this 24th day of March, 2026.

Respectfully,

Kamita Gray
Lead Complainant, BTB Coalition / ECCB
Directorial Chair, ECCB Neighborhood Leadership Council
2Bridge CDX

Karyn Sonu
Managerial Chair, ECCB Neighborhood Leadership Council

Brandywine TB Southern Region Neighborhood Coalition
8787 Branch Avenue, Suite #17
Clinton, Maryland 20735

M Schweisguth UNF Testimony

Uploaded by: Melissa Schweisguth

Position: UNF

Re: UNFAVORABLE report for SB1005

March 24, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Committee Members,

Thank you for your service to Maryland.

As a resident of Prince George's County (PGC), I respectfully urge the Committee to report unfavorably on Senate Bill 1005.

SB 1005 effectively proposes to dismantle the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's by eliminating its shared/centralized general counsel, human resources and information technology functions and instate separate legal counsel, HR and IT hired and directed by each county.

For nearly 11 years, I have been an active volunteer and avid user of M-NCPPC parks across both counties. I also am a leader of a local watershed group (speaking as an individual here), have testified before the PGC Planning Board on numerous development and master plans, and completed PGC's Planning Academy. Based on this involvement across many areas of M-NCPPC, I am compelled to highlight several grave concerns with the bill:

- It will effectively dismantle the commission by creating parallel and siloed legal, HR and IT functions across each county. M-NCPPC was created to ensure sound and coordinated development and parkland management across two highly interconnected and rapidly growing counties adjacent to Washington DC. Establishing parallel, siloed core functions will severely diminish the Commission's ability to ensure development, financial management, park management, trail connectivity and employee equity, harming outcomes in these areas.

- It will increase costs to taxpayers by requiring each county to hire and direct legal, HR and IT functions, without any demonstrated benefit to residents, park users, or employees. The Montgomery County Planning Board estimates an additional cost of $1 million to taxpayers in Montgomery County alone and we can expect the same for PGC taxpayers. Given the extended economic downturn and revenue deficit in Prince George's, taxpayers simply cannot afford this ill-advised proposal.

- There has not been sufficient transparency or time for many concerned parties to analyze the full effects of the bill. This bill has major implications that must not be handled in a rushed process. The bill was late filed, around February 24, by Prince George's County's senators, and routed to the Rules Committee. It appeared on the EEE hearing schedule on short notice. The PGC Planning Board held an "emergency meeting" with only 15 hours' notice, giving the public little time to analyze the bill or prepare comments. At that emergency meeting, the PGC Planning Board did not have any substantive discussion on the bill and hastily voted to support

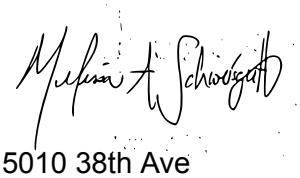
it unanimously in a meeting lasting less than ten minutes - including two members appointed only two days prior.

- Montgomery County Park/Planning was not consulted on the bill and its Planning Board has raised strong opposition. PGC's failure to engage and work with Montgomery County is simply inequitable and disrespectful and fails to consider the proposed bill's ramifications. The bill is proposing major structural changes that cannot be approved unless both counties shape and support them.

Please provide an UNFAVORABLE report and do not allow this harmful bill to advance. Please protect M-NCPPC's integrity, and with it good development, a world-class bi-county parks and trails system, residents, parks users and over 5,000 dedicated M-NCPPC employees.

Thank you very much for considering my comments on this critical issue.

Melissa Schweisguth



5010 38th Ave
Hyattsville MD, 20782
Prince George's County, D22

SB 1005 - MoCo County Council_OPP (GA 26).pdf
Uploaded by: Natali Fani-González
Position: UNF

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

March 23, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Council to state our firm **opposition to Senate Bill 1005,** *Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations*.

Senate Bill 1005 unwisely proposes a reorganization of the Park and Planning Commission by eliminating its core administrative functions. It would create a duplicative bureacruacy, costing Montgomery County taxpayers millions of dollars during a very tough budget year. This bill will have severe negative impacts on several departments including the Inspector General's office, Human Resources, Finance, and legal. It would increase fragmentation and weaken regional coordination on land use, transportation, parks, and environmental planning. Furthermore, this late-filed legislation did not benefit from the kind of consultation with stakeholders in Montgomery County that changes of this magnitude merit.

M-NCPPC is a national and local award-winning agency that has served the residents in Montgomery and Prince George's counties with national distinction for nearly a century. **Please do not let Senate Bill 1005 irreparably harm it.**

Sincerely,

Natali Fani

Natali Fani-González
Council President

cc: Montgomery County House and Senate Delegations

Montgomery County Council President Natali Fani-González
100 Maryland Ave. Rockville, MD 20850 | Councilmember.Fani-Gonzalez@montgomerycountymd.gov | 240.777.7870

SB 1005 - Maryland National Capital Park and Plann

Uploaded by: Peter Gray

Position: UNF

MC 5-26

SB 1005– Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – UNFAVORABLE

March 24, 2026

Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) envisions a just and sustainable transportation system where walking, biking, and transit are the best ways to get around the Washington region. This testimony is submitted on behalf of the thousands of members and supporters in Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

WABA does not support SB 1005 and urges the committee to vote unfavorably on this bill.

This bill will destabilize the Bi-County entity, MNCPPC, and create administrative duplication and will incur additional significant costs on top of the costs already involved in operating the Commission. The efficiencies that the Commission enjoys with it's current Bi-County structure will be eliminated.

Worse still, this bill will be a potential step towards destroying the political independence that the Montgomery and Prince George's County Planning Boards and Parks Departments currently enjoy as they are separate from the County Executives in both counties. That independence has led to the Planning Boards creating new and innovative plans, such as the Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan and other county-wide and more localized master plans, as well as investments in County Parks and multi-use trails in both counties.

Please vote against passing SB 1005 and preserve the positive efficiencies and independence that exists in the current MNCPPC structure.

Peter A Gray

Maryland Organizer

Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Email: peter@waba.org

STATEMENT OF ROYCE HANSON.pdf

Uploaded by: Royce Hanson

Position: UNF

STATEMENT OF ROYCE HANSON

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIREONMENT

OPPOSING SB 1005

March 25, 2026

Chair Feldman, Members of the Committee:

I apologize for not appearing in person but I will be out of state and of an age that makes improvident standing three or more hours to prove that I am harmless to the security of the United States.

When I learned of SB 1005, I hoped that the perspective gained from my experience of serving twice as chair or vice chair of the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (as chair of the Montgomery County Planning Board) for a total of 15 years, reflection on that experience, and several decades of teaching and research on issues of planning and urban development might be of some help to the committee as it considers this unfortunate bill.

I urge the committee to kill this bill, which would gut the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission of the function that gives it the independence necessary to speak truth to power on vital issues of land use and development, parks, recreation, and resource conservation in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. This bill strips the commission of its general counsel, its bi-county human resources system, which manages its merit system, and its bi-county information technology system. I will focus first on the office of general counsel, its importance to the commission and the respective county planning boards.

This is the latest of periodic attempts to dismember of the commission over its 100-year history. These efforts generally were triggered by some action of the commission or its general counsel that upset a county executive or council by offering advice they did not want to hear. Providing truth to power is, of course, one of the most important responsibilities of the commission and its principal officers and staff. It is a particular responsibility of the general counsel. The bill solves a problem that does not exist. It is a not only a bad idea. It will materially damage the quality and integrity of the commission's work in both counties.

The planning boards deal with development, the most important economic activity and politically the most sensitive in the two counties. It is critical for commissioners and staff to have highly competent and independent legal advice and support for their decisions. Because the general counsel, as a statutory officer of the commission, must be chosen

and can be dismissed only by the full commission, that arrangement provides a level of insulation from the politics of each county and an important guard against corruption.

It has been a key to making the commission one of the most effective planning organizations in the nation. Over the 100-year history of the commission, its office of general counsel has become one of foremost land use and park law practices in the country. It has out-lawyered some of the most prominent land use attorneys in the country and provided the legal foundation for some of the most innovative land use policies in the nation.

As one who has served longer than anyone else as a planning commissioner and board chair in my county I relied heavily and often on that office. Its institutional independence within the commission from my direct or exclusive control ensured that the advice of counsel I received was never shaded to please me but to help me understand the legal alternatives for and consequences of proposed actions and to guide the board in making decisions that could withstand well-financed legal assault. I could count on the lawyers in that office to provide experienced and thoughtful counsel in the development of new policies to meet needs of the county. At the same time, I never doubted that the general counsel would vigorously defend decisions of the board. I can attest personally that most of the planning innovations credited to the boards on which I served would not have succeeded without the wise advice of the office of General Counsel.

Having the General Council be a *commission* officer ensures that each board & department receives independent advice because the General Counsel is not dependent on any one board or its chair, but is responsible to the whole commission. Associate general counsels assigned to the Planning Boards and as department legal advisers are responsible to the General Counsel—not to the separate board chairs, the boards, or the departments. Their positions are analogous to the relationship of the Attorney General to the governor and executive departments. A brief notice of the current relationship of the U.S. Department of Justice to the president illustrates the unwisdom of making the law the servant of politics. The independence and professional quality of the office of General Counsel is also a significant factor in the commission's relationship with the bond rating agencies as they assess the overall effectiveness and stability of commission management.

There are additional advantages to the arrangement. It facilitates cross-fertilization of ideas and experience between the counties and has built over a century, a body of law common to both while accommodating unique policies pursued separately. Pooling resources of the two counties enables support of a high quality legal staff that neither county alone would likely provide. Giving attorneys experience in both counties broadens perspectives and

makes it possible to recruit outstanding young attorneys to work at the commission, many of whom have become outstanding practitioners at private firms. Having a strong central office also provides valuable support and backup for young attorneys and associate counsel assigned to departments and to advise the boards. The breadth of responsibilities of the office and its relative independence has made it possible to persuade outstanding lawyers to take the position of general counsel.

The division of the IT and HR functions is just bad management and dumb economics. These are service functions that by placing them in the bi-county offices provides economies of scale, provides for a commission-wide personnel system that helps recruiting and career development, and a more robust IT system. They are, aside from budgeting and general administrative e services, the most important functions of the executive director and they are essential to the operations of the Secretary-Treasurer of the Commission.

SB 1005 is not well-conceived and may, I fear, may not be well-intended. It should not go forward.

UNFAVORABLE TESTIMONY ON SB 1005 SUBMITTED BY SUSA

Uploaded by: Susan Barnett

Position: UNF

UNFAVORABLE TESTIMONY ON SB 1005 SUBMITTED BY SUSAN BARNETT

To: Chair and Members of the Senate Energy, Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

I am writing to submit my Unfavorable Testimony on SB 1005.

This bill will destabilize the balance of power needed for responsible discission making within the Prince George's County system and within the MNCPPC system.

The bill has not had time to receive full review by all parties impacted and the public. There has been negative feedback on this bill from:

1. The Montgomery County Planning Board- they have issued a statement urging the General Assembly to reject SB 1005.
2. Ten former PG County Planning Board members (Four former chairs, two vice-chairs, and four regular members). They opposed SB 1005
3. Former M-NCPPC general counsel Adrian Gardner wrote to the chairs of the MoCo and PG House and Senate delegations. Mr. Gardner closed his letter with this statement::

   "Meanwhile, it would be an unmitigated disaster for the agency to have separate counsel for human resources, information technology, procurement, etc. Those functions are decidedly corporate-wide because consistency in the interpretation of agency statutes, regulations and policies is so essential."

Clearly this bill is not appropriate and should not move forward. Please provide the needed UNFAVORABLE response.

Sincerely,

Susan Barnett

Greenbelt, MD

Unfavorable - SB1005 - M-NCPPC Alterations (2026).
Uploaded by: Susan McCutchen
Position: UNF

March 26, 2026

Written Testimony Unfavorable to SB1005 – Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards - Alterations

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Susan McCutchen. I am writing in strong opposition to SB1005, sponsored by Prince George's County Senators.

This bill addresses: *Repealing the requirement that the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission appoint a general counsel; requiring the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Prince George's County Planning Board to appoint legal counsel for Commission operations within each respective county subject to certain requirements; requiring the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Prince George's County Planning Board to exercise direct authority over certain functions within each county; etc.*

From my two decades of experience as a contractor for the M-NCPPC, I have learned that it is not by any means a well-oiled administrative machine and it is highly political, neither of which is a surprise for a large, unwieldy government organization. *SB1005 decidedly would not be an improvement and likely would make policies and procedures even more complicated*. *It would create more top-level layers of administration and further enhance the operational control and overarching power of the County Executive and Prince George's County Planning Board Chair.* If money is to be spent, it should be on improving the current system by streamlining the top-heavy level of administrators who consistently look to advance their careers, end up befuddling procedures as a result, and hinder effective administration throughout the system.

SB1005 would likely cost taxpayers millions every year because it would fundamentally restructure core functions at the M-NCPPC. Further, it would probably give even more political juice to the County Executive and Planning Board Chair, who already are opaque in their actions and wield unchecked power. The thought that the General Assembly would approve this last-minute power grab and fail to thoroughly explore the potential impacts of this legislation is alarming.

The history of the deliberations about SB1005 is suspect. The full commission discussed it on March 18, at which time Prince George's County Planning Board Chair Darryl Barnes did not vote on a position. Montgomery County Planning Board Vice-Chair Josh Linden wanted a vote, which did not happen, but he asked for at least an update and discussion. After this update and a short briefing from the General Council, several Montgomery County members expressed concerns about the bill's potential fiscal and operational impacts, the loss of legal counsel's independence and objectivity, and impacts on staff and retirees. *No Prince George's County members asked questions or offered substantive comments*. Following Chair Barnes' insistence that the board needed to discuss, deliberate, and make an "informed and intelligent decision," a seven-minute emergency meeting was convened on March 20, at which there was no substantive discussion, other than an expressed concern about potential impacts on merit employees and retirees. A not-unexpected fait accompli, the board voted to support SB1005. On March 23, Chair Barnes sent out a broad community message (a letter dated March 20) to justify his arguments and make assurances that "our responsibilities to our employees, residents, and stakeholders remain the same." A decision made with limited discussion and transparency is not very assuring.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in strong opposition to SB1005. Please do not advance it further.

Sincerely,

Susan R. McCutchen
5404 Spring Road, Bladensburg, Maryland
Tel: 301-699-9035

SB 1005- MNCPPC - General Council and Powers of Lo

Uploaded by: Tom Ballentine

Position: UNF

NAIOP
MARYLAND CHAPTERS
THE ASSOCIATION FOR COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

March 24, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Unfavorable: SB 1005 – MNCPPC – General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards

Dear, Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

On behalf of the NAIOP Maryland Chapters, representing 700 companies involved in all aspects of commercial, light-industrial, and mixed-use real estate, I am writing to recommend your unfavorable report on SB 1005.

Overview of SB 1005

SB 1005 proposes a significant restructuring of the centralized legal, personnel management and administrative functions of the Commission, transferring those responsibilities to the individual planning boards in Montgomery County and Prince George's County. The bill would eliminate the position of Commission General Counsel, requiring that the two counties appoint individual legal counsel for operations in their respective counties. Also, the county planning boards, rather than the Commission, would exercise direct authority over the professional and technical staff providing planning and other related services in their jurisdiction.

Rationale for NAIOP's Position

For nearly a century, MNCPPC has provided a coordinated, efficient system for land use, park planning, and development review in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. Its centralized structure enables both counties to share specialized legal, HR, IT, and administrative functions as well as policy analysis and planning expertise. The Commission framework provides these collaborative advantages, but each county planning board remains independent with exclusive authority over regulations, development review zoning ordinances and zoning maps.

Our members believe SB 1005 would disrupt this proven model, creating uncertainty, higher costs, and reduced consistency in regional planning. It would replace a well-functioning, nationally respected, and cost-effective framework with a duplicative and less coordinated structure. For the commercial real estate industry, county residents, and other stakeholders who depend on the Commission's professionalism and predictability, the impacts would be directly harmful.

For these reasons, NAIOP respectfully recommends your unfavorable report on SB 1005.

Sincerely,

Tom Ballentine, Vice President for Policy
NAIOP – Maryland Chapters, *The Association for Commercial Real Estate*

cc: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee Members
Nick Manis – Manis, Canning Assoc.

U.S. Mail: 12 Francis Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401 **Phone:** 410.977.2053 **Email:** tom.ballentine@naiop-md.org

INFORMATIONAL POSITION STATEMENT SB 1005 MNCPPC Ge

Uploaded by: Jordan Baucum Colbert

Position: INFO

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
Park and Planning Commission

INFORMATIONAL POSITION STATEMENT

Bill: SB 1005 Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission General Counsel and Powers of Local Planning Boards – Alterations

Position: Informational **Date:** March 26, 2026

Contact: Michael Aniton, Acting General Counsel

Jordan Baucum Colbert, Senior Government Affairs Analyst

Dear Chair Brian Feldman,

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission ("M-NCPPC" or "the Commission") has not voted on this bill. Therefore, the full Commission does not have a position. ***The Montgomery County Planning Board voted to oppose this bill. The Prince George's Planning Board has voted to support this bill.***

The Office of General Counsel offers background and historical information.

What this Bill Does. The purpose of this bill is to repeal the requirement that M-NCPPC appoint a general counsel. This bill requires the Montgomery County Planning Board to appoint a legal counsel for the Commission operations conducted primarily in Montgomery County. This bill requires the Prince George's County Planning Board to appoint a legal counsel for the Commission operations conducted primarily in Prince George's County. Legal Counsel appointed under this law, if passed, would serve at the pleasure of the appointing county planning board. Additionally, the bill requires the Commission to appoint one of the legal counsel from each planning board to represent the Commission as a single corporate entity and to provide legal services to the Inspector General.

This bill also grants the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Prince George's County Planning Board direct authority and control over administrative functions for Commission operations within each respective county for:

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i. Human Resources
ii. IT
iii. Legal Services
iv. Procurement (recently amended)

The bill indicates that the Commission may use shared administrative services. The effective date for this bill is October 26, 2026.

Land Use Article §15-101. (a) There is a Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. (b) The Commission is a body politic and corporate and is an agency of the State.

Historical Background About M-NCPPC. Founded in 1927, M-NCPPC is a nationally recognized leader in land use planning, parks, and recreation achieving countless awards for innovation, stewardship and exemplary vision for enhancing the lives of current and future generations. The agency, which is chartered by the State of Maryland, has geographic authority in the Montgomery County and Prince George's County region, which are the two Maryland counties surrounding Washington, DC.

Current Structure. The Commission is comprised of 7 distinct departments, each led by their respective Department Head as indicated below. **This bill gives direct authority and control over administrative functions for Commission operations within each respective county for IT, Human Resources, Legal Services and Procurement. The bill as written will alter the current structure of the Commission.**

Functions under the current structure.

- The Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County, and the Prince George's County Planning Department carry out services for Prince George's County. The Directors of these two departments are appointed by the Prince George's County Planning Board.
- Montgomery Parks and Montgomery Planning carry out services for Montgomery County. The Director for these two departments are appointed by the Montgomery County Planning Board.
- Bi-county corporate management is carried out through Central Administrative Services (CAS) by the Department of Human Resources and Management, the Department of Finance, and the Office of the General Counsel.
- Other Bi-county functions also include the Office of Inspector General, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, Merit System Board and Employee Retirement System (ERS).

I. Department of Human Resources. The Department of Human Resources and Management (DHRM) delivers executive and operational leadership through corporate governance for the Commission. This includes:

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- Corporate budgeting and prudent fiscal planning
- Human resources administration and programs that ensure equal employment opportunities and fair practices
- Organizational standards, promoting public accountability, organizational effectiveness, and a preferred workplace

The Executive Director oversees the work of the department and carries out specific executive functions for the Commission. Under the leadership of the Executive Director, the Department of Human Resources and Management includes 4 divisions:

- Corporate Human Resources
- Corporate Policy and Management Operations
- Corporate Budget Office
- Corporate Communications

II. Information Technology (IT). The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), as led by the Chief Information Officer (CIO), defines, implements, monitors, and maintains Enterprise Information Technology (EIT) for the M-NCPPC. The OCIO works to ensure transparency and maximize value to the taxpayer.

- The CIO strives to ensure the right EIT is in the right place, at the right time, working with the Chief Technology Officers of each department. Together, they assign EIT across the Commission, to deliver highly reliable and secure services and products.

Corporate Information Technology

- Corporate IT provides Commission-wide Information Technology (IT) infrastructure standards, core business systems, data security, service, and support to all departments in the Commission.
- Corporate IT also implements and administers IT governance policies established by the Chief Information Officer (CIO) to ensure accountability and protection of the Commission's data.
- Corporate IT is comprised of two Divisions: Enterprise IT (EIT) and Executive Office Building IT (EOB-IT).

III. Office of General Counsel (OGC). The mission of the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) is to provide cost effective legal advice and representation of the highest quality to the Commission as a corporate entity. The primary focus of the work program is providing proactive counsel, preventive advice, and early intervention to support decision-makers with a clear picture of all their lawful options.

Under the direction of the General Counsel, the OGC provides a comprehensive program of legal services to the Commission, supporting virtually every facet of the Commission's work program including, but not limited to:

- Advocating on the Commission's behalf in litigation before State and Federal courts
- Guiding the Commission's internal corporate operations

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- Advising Commission staff and the Planning Boards concerning their regulatory responsibilities
- Participating in cross-functional teams to develop creative solutions to challenges facing the Commission
- Providing consistent and sound ethical and legal advice

Work Programs

- Corporate Governance
- Legislation
- Litigation
- Transactions
- Land-Use and Planning
- Compliance and Ethics

In addition, the OGC provides legal services to the Office of the Inspector General, who is responsible for investigating cases of fraud, waste and abuse.

Service of Process: Service of Process to the Commission should be made to the General Counsel in the Office of General Counsel.

IV. Department of Finance. The Finance Department operates under the direction of the Secretary-Treasurer. The mission of the Finance Department is to provide comprehensive financial services, planning, and management information systems using advanced technologies to Commission management staff, Montgomery and Prince George's County governments, and other relevant outside entities. The Finance Department serves as a means of maintaining a financially sound organization to support Commission programs and to assure fiscal accountability.

It is organized into three (3) service areas:

- Corporate Financial Services & Finance Administration
- Corporate Procurement Services
- Corporate Accounting Services

The Department is responsible for:

- Accounting and Financial Reporting
- Financial Systems Administration and User Security
- Corporate Financial Policy
- Management of Debt and Investments
- Payroll Administration and Disbursements
- Procurement

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