

Testimony in Support with Amendments House Bill 855 Common Ownership Communities Candidate or Proposition Signs Display Period

Chair, Vice Chair, and distinguished members of the Committee: My name is The Honorable Dr Cashenna A Cross. I serve as Councilwoman at Large for the City of Glenarden. I respectfully submit testimony in support of House Bill 855 with targeted amendments. My perspective is shaped by decades of public service, military leadership, and municipal governance, as well as direct engagement with residents whose participation in democracy often begins at their own front door.

House Bill 855 advances an important principle. Residents who live in condominiums, cooperatives, and homeowners associations should not face unnecessary barriers when expressing support for candidates or ballot questions. Extending the allowable display period to forty five days before early voting reflects how modern elections operate and allows communities adequate time for civic dialogue and voter awareness.

Throughout my service in local government, I have seen how visible civic participation strengthens neighborhoods and encourages informed engagement. When residents are able to respectfully express viewpoints where they live, participation increases and trust in the democratic process grows.

At the same time, effective governance requires balance. Common ownership communities and municipalities must retain the ability to ensure safety, protect shared spaces, and apply standards fairly. Clarifying these expectations will help prevent disputes while preserving the intent of the legislation.

Recommended Amendments

- Preserve reasonable municipal authority to regulate placement for safety, visibility, and emergency access.
- Require uniform and nondiscriminatory enforcement by associations to prevent selective application of rules.
- Prevent excessive size or placement limitations that effectively suppress lawful political expression.
- Require education and notice to residents before enforcement actions or penalties are imposed.

These amendments strengthen the bill by ensuring that democratic expression and responsible community governance coexist without conflict. Maryland has long valued civic participation, and this legislation supports that tradition while maintaining practical clarity for local implementation. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report with amendments on House Bill 855.

Respectfully submitted, The Honorable Dr Cashenna A Cross Councilwoman at Large, City of
Glenarden Municipal Advocate 571 719 8784