



6240 Old Dobbin Lane ■ Suite 110 ■ Columbia, MD 21045

November 26, 2018

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Senator
District 13, Howard County
121 James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Dr. Terri Hill
House of Delegates
District 12, Baltimore and Howard Counties
215 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Howard County Local Bill Comments

Dear Delegate Hill and Senator Guzzone:

As we prepare for the upcoming 2019 General Assembly legislative session, the Howard County (Chamber) appreciates the opportunity to share our thoughts and opinions concerning some of the proposed local legislation being considered. Of the bills under consideration, there are two in particular that are of concern to us. Those bills are Ho. Co. 4-19 – Fees on Disposable Bags and Ho. Co. 3- 19 - Impact Fee Calculations.

Chesapeake Bay impact, Global Warming, and general environmental concerns are all of interest and importance to the Chamber. As such, we understand that both commercial and personal behaviors must be evaluated and, in some cases, modified to protect the environment. From a business standpoint, this often means more regulation. Ho. Co. 4-19 is of particular concern to the Chamber because in mandating a fee on plastic bags only, it forces consumers (and retailers) into paper, which costs four to five times more than plastic. Current testing is also inconclusive as to whether paper is actually better for the environment. In an industry where profit margins average 1.8% - 1.9%, there are concerns that if costs continue to increase, we will see limited industry growth. This is of great concern in a county where population growth is forecasted, as losing grocers could lead to food deserts, which then impact public health.

There are also concerns about how this will impact business in light of a host of bills that have either been passed – Mandatory Paid Sick Leave, or have been proposed – Minimum Wage and Predictive Scheduling. Should Howard County elect to have a bag fee, it is our hope that legislation will be considered where costs are shared between businesses, consumers and the local government. For example, in Montgomery County, MD, a five-cent fee exists, but the retailer keeps one cent of the five for administrative costs. The County keeps the rest for environmentally friendly projects. This model has also proven successful in places like Washington, D.C. and Long Island, NY.

The Chamber is also very concerned about potential legislation that would increase the facilities surcharge. We are lucky to enjoy one of the country's top public school systems, which allows the county to attract businesses and the best talent. But we know that our school system is facing serious fiscal challenges, inhibiting the system's ability to grow. While some believe an increased facilities surcharge is the solution, we are concerned that such an increase would prevent development in the county. We are also aware of concerns that the anticipated revenue would not be as impactful as some might believe. Education has and will always be a major priority for our county. Nonetheless, we must address development growth and school planning in a comprehensive manner that not only includes fee analysis, but also redistricting.

The Chamber thanks you for your consideration of the concerns expressed above and would be happy to discuss these and any other matters in the days ahead. I have also attached our 2019 Legislative Issues Brief for your review.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leonardo McClarty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leonardo McClarty, CCE
President/CEO, Howard County Chamber

Enclosure – 2019 Issues for Legislative Action

CC: Howard County Board of Directors
Howard County Legislative Affairs Committee