

Testimony Before the Howard County Council
in
Opposition to CB 182-2025.
By Ted Giovanis
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Good evening. My name is Ted Giovanis, and I live in Highland. I am testifying in opposition to CB 182-2025 and the proposed reappointment to the Board of Appeals.

My concerns focus on three areas:

1. *Board Oversight.*

- The current process is uncontrolled, resulting in decisions that often conflict with the public interest of Howard County.
- The Board operates without sufficient checks and balances. So, its decisions have been inconsistent, and in many cases, harmful to the County's long-term welfare.

2. *Member Qualifications/Credentialling.*

- Appointees often lack the legal or adjudicative background necessary to handle the complex matters before them. This deficiency, combined with vague or absent guidance, contributes to the troubling outcomes we continue to witness.

3. *Procedural Integrity.*

- The Board's standards for conflicts of interest are inadequate. There is no clear requirement for recusal when a member's professional interests may be affected by a case, undermining both the objectivity and credibility of the Board's decisions.
- Weak oversight and a lack of qualifications, result in poor determinations—ones that citizens must often challenge through costly litigation.
- Worse still, because the Board's decisions carry precedential weight, these flawed outcomes can ripple across future cases, compounding harm to the community.

The County Council has both the authority and the responsibility to address these issues. Through statutory direction and its appointment powers, the Council can—and must—establish a more accountable and qualified Board.

Thus, I urge the Council to undertake four critical reforms:

1. Provide clear, unambiguous guidance as to the Board's role and responsibilities.
2. Require appropriate qualifications for all appointees, and ensure multiple members are qualified to serve as Chair to strengthen leadership.
3. Institute rigorous and enforceable conflict-of-interest standards, including mandatory recusal.

4. Eliminate the “de novo” evidentiary approach, which will align the Board with standard appellate practices that review existing records rather than creating new ones, while enhancing governmental efficiency.

If the Council does not act now, the situation will deteriorate further.

This is the moment for the County Council to assert its leadership and restore integrity to the Board of Appeals. Doing so will protect the interests of Howard County residents and prevent unnecessary legal burdens on our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I welcome any questions you may have.