

Good Evening Council Members,

My name is Ryan Powers from Glenwood, and I'm testifying on behalf of the Howard County Citizens Association.

HCCA asks that the County Council approve CB6-2026 to prohibit members of the Howard County Ethics Commission from serving on other boards and commissions. We certainly appreciate Council member Yungmann's responsiveness to resident concerns. If the gentleman from D5 would feel so inclined, HCCA would like to offer a couple of amendments.

1) Conflicts of interest, or the appearance of conflicts of interest, are not well-addressed by current Howard County Public Ethics law unless they are financial in nature. In some circumstances like in this bill, it makes sense to prohibit the people charged with ethics from policing themselves. However, because there are many potential conflicts of interest on boards and commissions, we ask that all nominees/appointees be required to seek advisory opinions from the Ethics commission when a conflict of interest is known. For example, all board or commissioners should seek advisory opinions from the Ethics commission if their professional lives and interests interact with their board/commission duties. Clear rules and standards will help prevent even the appearance of conflict of interest. We believe such an amendment would be in keeping with the intention of this bill.

2) We suggest that members from board/commissions who are seeking an elected office be prohibited from receiving a financial contribution from people within their jurisdiction while serving Howard County. Such a regulation has precedent in Montgomery County, and again ensures against improper influence. While we believe quasi-judicial boards clearly qualify for this prohibition, we ask that the council decide where this would also be applicable. In a hypothetical example, people serving on the Animal Matters Hearing Board should be prohibited from taking donations from people with business before the board. People should be allowed to run for office and serve on a board/commission, but there need to be reasonable prohibitions against use of prestige of office.

Thank you for your time,

Ryan Powers, HCCA board member