
Concern about discontinuing TAI CHI program at the East Columbia 50+ Center

From Susan Keach Sweeney <skeachsweeney@gmail.com>

Date Tue 4/28/2026 9:48 PM

To Scott, Jacqueline <jrscott@howardcountymd.gov>; Ott, Ofelia <oross@howardcountymd.gov>; Madera, Matthew <mmadera@howardcountymd.gov>; Rittenhouse, Jennie <jrittenhouse@howardcountymd.gov>; CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

Cc Ping Mao <jpingmao@gmail.com>; winckels@gmail.com <winckels@gmail.com>; iomcastlerushen@gmail.com <iomcastlerushen@gmail.com>; robertengli@gmail.com <robertengli@gmail.com>; dboneducksfeet@msn.com <dboneducksfeet@msn.com>; razzaro@verizon.net <razzaro@verizon.net>; pcsegawa@yahoo.com <pcsegawa@yahoo.com>; kjgrady2626@gmail.com <kjgrady2626@gmail.com>; 54iomcastlerushen@gmail.com <54iomcastlerushen@gmail.com>; schoen.liz@gmail.com <schoen.liz@gmail.com>; jean.grady4@verizon.net <jean.grady4@verizon.net>; paul.f.smith.1@gmail.com <paul.f.smith.1@gmail.com>; terriec53@gmail.com <terriec53@gmail.com>; stellawu902@gmail.com <stellawu902@gmail.com>; smcgscott@gmail.com <smcgscott@gmail.com>; annwings1@gmail.com <annwings1@gmail.com>; fflopresti@gmail.com <fflopresti@gmail.com>; rosa.pope@gmail.com <rosa.pope@gmail.com>; joleeharv@verizon.net <joleeharv@verizon.net>; npollack@comcast.net <npollack@comcast.net>

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- Department of Community Resources - Jackie Scott, jrscott@howardcountymd.gov
- Howard County Office on Aging Administrator - Ofelia Ross Ott, oross@howardcountymd.gov
- Howard County 50+ Center Division Manager - Matt Madera, mmadera@howardcountymd.gov
- Howard County Procurement and Contract Administration - Jennie Rittenhouse, jrittenhouse@howardcountymd.gov
- Howard County Council Members

Dear Ms. Scott, Ms. Ott, Mr. Madera, an Ms. Rittenhouse, and members of the Howard County Council,

The plan to reduce TAI CHI classes at the East Columbia 50+ Center after June is not in alignment with Howard County's dedication to improving the quality of life for seniors. I am writing to ask for an explanation for why one of the best exercise programs for people over 60*, TAI CHI, is being reduced from seven levels to one level, and also to ask you to consider reversing this decision.

The TAI CHI program at the 50+ Center has been a model of a highly successful exercise program since it started in 2007 with eight students. The program includes seven classes of TAI CHI so that students can advance to mastery levels, as well as numerous enrichment activities including trips to China. Over 110 students participate in these classes. My understanding is that only one level will be offered after June.

Many of the current students wrote to the Office on Aging asking to keep this program with Ping Mao and the seven levels of TAI CHI. We have received no explanation about why this change is planned. Also, the Office on Aging did not ask us for any input. We are taxpayers, and have been for many years. Why were we not sought out for input about major changes or about anything offered by the Center? So many of us wrote very strong statements (unsolicited) that we were shocked to find that our input meant nothing. We would appreciate both input and transparency and an opportunity to weigh in before decisions are made.

I understand that budget issues may be part of this. But cutting down popular and extremely beneficial programs may not be the only solution. In an informal discussion today before class, some of us came up with several ideas for addressing budget and space issues.

Almost all exercise is beneficial. However, there is a huge and growing body of research* showing the advantages of TAI CHI, for everyone, but particularly for the senior population, including benefits for cognitive functioning. Why is one of the most popular programs at the 50+ Center and one of the most beneficial for seniors, based on decades of research, being reduced to a smaller program? It makes no sense.

Also, has the Office on Aging overlooked a potential golden opportunity? Perhaps there are researchers at UMD or Johns Hopkins who would welcome the opportunity to research the benefits of advanced TAI CHI in this model program at the 50+ Center.

Most of us want to be able to continue to advance, and not just keep taking level 1 over and over. We would prefer to do it at the East Columbia 50+ Center, where it is convenient and probably less expensive than other potential venues. Also, there is no way that all of us could even be accommodated in one class.

Please look into this decision which is not in alignment with Howard County's goals. Please let us know how this could have happened and can the decision be changed to keep Ping Mao's successful program with seven levels of TAI CHI at the East Columbia 50+ Center.

Susan Keach Sweeney
susankeach@comcast.net
or skeachsweeney@gmail.com
443-756-6231

CC: Dr. Ping Mao, jpingmao@gmail.com, TAI CHI students
Note: the same letter was also sent to The Honorable Calvin Ball

***The Health Benefits of Tai Chi and How to Get Started**

<https://www.ncoa.org/article/the-health-benefits-of-tai-chi-and-how-to-get-started/>

A sharper mind: tai chi can improve cognitive function

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/a-sharper-mind-tai-chi-can-improve-cognitive-function>

The Health Benefits of Tai Chi

https://www.health.harvard.edu/exercise-and-fitness/the-health-benefits-of-tai-chi?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=18565149240&gbraid=0AAAAADpNyNw2MVcjmdUQuo2HLP

[e4WYVGW&gclid=CjwKCAjw46HPBhAMEiwASZpLRPrEZpVPPZhpLrmPExZJhk_cHvxH9836xwfDwg-K2yn1nOg6ntChhxoCipYQAvD_BwE](https://www.google.com/search?q=e4WYVGW&gclid=CjwKCAjw46HPBhAMEiwASZpLRPrEZpVPPZhpLrmPExZJhk_cHvxH9836xwfDwg-K2yn1nOg6ntChhxoCipYQAvD_BwE)

The Health Benefits of Tai Chi by Harvard Medical School

<https://chenbing.org/insights/f/the-health-benefits-of-tai-chi-by-harvard-medical-school>

Health benefits of tai chi

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9844554/>

8 Surprising Reasons to Try Tai Chi After 50

[8 Surprising Reasons to Try Tai Chi After 50](#)

Reducing Tai Chi classes at the East Columbia 50+ Center

From Liz <schoen.liz@gmail.com>

Date Wed 4/29/2026 12:13 PM

To Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>; CouncilDistrict4@howardcountymd.gov <CouncilDistrict4@howardcountymd.gov>; Scott, Jacqueline <jrscott@howardcountymd.gov>; Ott, Ofelia <ross@howardcountymd.gov>; Madera, Matthew <mmadera@howardcountymd.gov>; Rittenhouse, Jennie <jrittenhouse@howardcountymd.gov>; CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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Dear Dr. Ball,

I am writing about the reduction of Dr. Ping Mao's tai chi classes at the East Columbia Senior Center.

I have been a student of Dr. Ping Mao for the last five years. I had two very good teachers of tai chi and qi gong before Dr. Mao. I am very grateful that I made my way to Dr. Mao's classes.

Dr. Mao is an experienced practitioner of Chinese Martial Arts. He is an excellent teacher of Qi Gong and Tai Chi. He has built a large program with 7 classes, over 100 students and a long waiting list because he is a very capable, adaptable and caring teacher. He organizes extracurricular activities including International Tai Chi day practices, holiday parties and trips to China, where in the past his students participated in tai chi competitions. He has created a community of his students and their families. By my observation we provide a lot of the activity at our center.

It seems that administrative decisions were made without any effort to talk directly with the people who take classes at the senior centers. Certainly no one reached out to us. When Dr. Mao told us about the new bidding process many of us wrote to Jenny Rittenhouse to tell her how much we value Dr. Mao's classes. While I received a stock response to my email, no one from the office on Aging reached out to talk with us directly. A stack of notices showed up in our classroom one day to reassure

us that the plan wasn't to eliminate valued classes. This turns out to not be the case. I did not save a copy of this letter so it is possible I misunderstood the intent.

Dr. Mao and his students advocated vigorously for the building of the new East Columbia Center. My understanding is that Dr. Mao and his students wrote letters, went to meetings, provided testimony at hearings and worked closely with the staff at the East Columbia center. For Dr. Mao to be tossed out now is a betrayal of his commitment and efforts. I doubt that Meridy McCague or the other staff at the East Columbia Center would do such a thing leaving me wondering if they were consulted about these changes.

Since we don't have any information from the Office on Aging rumors are abounding and include one that the plan is to contract with one vendor who will provide all the activity classes. In my estimation this is a recipe for mediocrity. And totally unnecessary in a county where we have so much expertise. We have seniors with lots of varied life experience, who are able to discern quality and expect very good teachers.

Given that the office on Aging is spending our tax dollars it is reasonable for us to have information about the reasons for major changes in programming. We also deserve to be heard.

Please look into this and take action to restore our tai chi classes and ensure that the senior centers offer quality programs.

Most sincerely,

Liz Schoen

schoen.liz@gmail.com

410-908-0018

Renewal of Dr. Ping's Tai Chi Contract

From Rita Cohen <rcohen0126@aol.com>

Date Wed 4/29/2026 2:57 PM

To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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Hello,

I have previously written to you about Dr. Ping Mao, and I know that by now you have received many, many emails from many of the 110 Tai Chi students he teaches at the East Columbia 50+ Center. I know you've received all the information about the value of Tai Chi so I will not repeat them here. I'm sure that you are also now more aware of how we all feel about him not being awarded a new contract and that on June 30th the loss of the 7 classes that he teaches along with the social enrichment that he provides to us senior citizens at the center will occur. We don't know why this is happening, and we deserve to know the reason why we are being cut off from something that has been active and so very valuable to the senior citizen community in Howard County for almost 20 years. We need a resolution and want you to find a way to renew Dr. Ping's contract so that all of his Tai Chi classes continue at the East Columbia 50+ center.

Please re-consider this decision and share our plea with the powers that be!
Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Respectfully submitted,
Rita Cohen
Hickory Ridge, Columbia

Sent from my iPad

Concern about discontinuing TAI CHI program at the East Columbia 50+ Center

From Susan Keach Sweeney <skeachsweeney@gmail.com>

Date Fri 5/1/2026 5:42 PM

To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

Cc Ping Mao <jpingmao@gmail.com>; winckels@gmail.com <winckels@gmail.com>; iomcastlerushen@gmail.com <iomcastlerushen@gmail.com>; robertengli@gmail.com <robertengli@gmail.com>; dboneducksfeet@msn.com <dboneducksfeet@msn.com>; razzaro@verizon.net <razzaro@verizon.net>; pcsegawa@yahoo.com <pcsegawa@yahoo.com>; kjgrady2626@gmail.com <kjgrady2626@gmail.com>; 54iomcastlerushen@gmail.com <54iomcastlerushen@gmail.com>; schoen.liz@gmail.com <schoen.liz@gmail.com>; jean.grady4@verizon.net <jean.grady4@verizon.net>; paul.f.smith.1@gmail.com <paul.f.smith.1@gmail.com>; terriec53@gmail.com <terriec53@gmail.com>; stellawu902@gmail.com <stellawu902@gmail.com>; smcgscott@gmail.com <smcgscott@gmail.com>; annwings1@gmail.com <annwings1@gmail.com>; fflopresti@gmail.com <fflopresti@gmail.com>; rosa.pope@gmail.com <rosa.pope@gmail.com>; joleeharv@verizon.net <joleeharv@verizon.net>; npollack@comcast.net <npollack@comcast.net>

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Susan Keach Sweeney
susankeach@comcast.net
or skeachsweeney@gmail.com
443-756-6231

CC: Dr. Ping Mao, jpingmao@gmail.com, TAI CHI students
Note: the same letter was also sent to The Honorable Calvin Ball

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8 Surprising Reasons to Try Tai Chi After 50

[8 Surprising Reasons to Try Tai Chi After 50](#)

Tai chi classes at East Columbia 50 plus center

From Holly Crawford <hcrawford6512@gmail.com>

Date Sat 5/2/2026 11:34 PM

To Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>; CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>; Rigby, Christiana <crigby@howardcountymd.gov>; map <MAP@howardcountymd.gov>

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As you have surely heard by now, many are extremely disappointed in the removal of Master Ping's Tai Chi classes at our 50 plus centers. Not allowing those of us over 50 to have the excellent health benefits (mental and physical) that Tai Chi provides because of a random county decision is amazing. It is disenfranchising the very people the center was built to serve.

The area of the East Columbia 50 plus center is already often disenfranchised because it is not as wealthy as River Hill or Ellicott City or surrounding Western county areas. We continually have to fight for the most basic services here.

We also vote in elections and pay taxes. We have a right to services that our taxes pay for and that benefit the community. The 50 plus centers were designed for the help of older residents in Columbia and surrounding. Removing this program is the opposite of that goal.

I am tired of being continually disappointed in the government of Howard County as they serve developers and the rich and refuse to serve the residents. My votes will reflect my dissatisfaction. I implore you to restore the classes that Master Ping has been teaching. He has more than 100 students at the East Columbia center alone. Please reconsider and provide the services that we are paying for in our own neighborhood. Master Ping has been teaching for over 19 years. He is an extremely skilled master of Tai chi. He knows his business from a scientific, medical, spiritual and health perspective. You could not find a better teacher.

Please correct this gross oversight.

H Crawford

Termination of Tai Chi program at the East Columbia 50+ Center reversal

From Harry . <dboneducksfeet@msn.com>

Date Sun 5/3/2026 7:46 PM

To Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>; CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>; Jones, Opel <ojones@howardcountymd.gov>

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May 03, 2026

Honorable Calvin Ball and members of the Howard County Council,

I have been a resident of Howard County for over 35 years, and since retirement I've participated in Tai Chi classes offered for seniors at the East Columbia 50+ Center. I have recently learned that the Howard County Office of Aging and Independence has decided NOT to award instructor Jian Ping Mao, a Howard County resident, a contract to continue teaching Tai Chi classes at the Howard County East Columbia 50+ Center. It is my understanding that the Request For Proposal (RFP) did not clearly call out the criteria for evaluation, and there has been little to no feedback in the process. It is ironic that if you visit the Office of Aging website (https://www.howardcountymd.gov/aging-independence#_0-centers) you clearly see advertise under "activities and programs" a picture of instructor Jian Pin Mao leading a Tai Chi activity:

The screenshot shows a website interface with a dark blue sidebar on the left containing icons for a person, a building, a group of people, and social media links for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The main content area has a white background with the heading "Activities & Programs". Below the heading is a paragraph: "Check out our wide range of engaging programs and activities that promote social connection, lifelong learning, wellness, and active aging for older adults." This is followed by another paragraph: "For information about facility closings or delays due to inclement weather, call 410-313-7777 (voice/relay)." At the bottom of this section is a green button with the text "VIEW ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMS" and a right-pointing arrow. To the right of the text is a photograph of a group of people in various colored Tai Chi uniforms (red, blue, white, black) practicing Tai Chi in an outdoor setting with trees and a paved area. A green circular arrow icon is visible at the bottom right of the screenshot.

What began as a single Tai Chi "class" in, at the time, a very modest 3,800 square foot facility to over 110 students in a 29,000 square feet East Columbia 50+ Center. Along the way Dr. Mao garnered media coverage for his Tai Chi class:

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/2017/12/07/tai-chi-at-columbia-east-50-center/>

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/2017/12/14/surprises-greet-howard-county-50-centers-tai-chi-class-in-china/>

<https://www.thebeaconnewspapers.com/international-tai-chi-champions/>

When talks of building a new facility began, Dr. Mao and his Tai Chi students/members vigorously campaigned in support of a new building to host the growing interest in Tai Chi. Members wrote letters and attended meetings/hearings. It is my understanding that at one such hearing, sixty (60) members attended (some wearing the traditional Tai Chi attire) to provide testimonies on the value of such an infrastructure to serve the community.

Dr. Mao has clearly demonstrated his expertise and ability to teach Tai Chi in a way that interests and motivates students where they will continue to return each session and advance. I would argue that Dr. Mao has created a "**program**" with **seven** levels of instructions much like an athletic program divided into levels of play from beginner to intermediate to advanced. Instead of "one class fits all", Dr. Mao offers classes dependent on the student's level of mastery. For a beginner, this would reduce a student's potential frustration with not being able to keep up with more advanced students and allow them to establish fundamentals and grow confidence. At the same time, this provides more advanced students with challenges to progress in the Tai Chi practice. He adapts his techniques to the needs of various fitness levels and physical limitations.

There are numerous articles touting Tai Chi practice for its physical benefits and also for its cognitive functioning benefits. Recent studies also advocate the importance of social interactions for the overall well-being of the senior population. Dr. Mao's program is unique in that it not only provides a service (teaching multiple levels of Tai Chi) but also a community. The interaction of Dr. Mao's Tai Chi students continues beyond the class. He often organizes regular events to bring members of the various levels together in intertwined activities, creating a large community of students who actively support each other. This may involve supporting a fellow member with emotional support (loss of loved ones), life changing events (home destroyed by fire), to holiday celebrations with a group meal event involving over 60+ members. Dr. Mao has even organized trips to the birthplace of Tai Chi as noted in the news articles. Multiple trips have taken place, and these are not the same trip. He works with a tour company to customize the trips to include the regular tourist destination and also other lesser known venues, not only bonding the students but also broadening their cultural horizons. The group has participated in World Tai Chi Day and various demonstrations. These are small examples of how the program works to connect a community of Tai Chi practitioners and reduce isolation.

There are not many offerings that provide the level of benefits that Dr. Mao's Tai Chi program provides. It is distressing to learn that his application to the RFP was not accepted and that the many levels of Tai Chi classes will end come June 30. It is interesting that a

group that supported the building of the East Columbia 50+ Center and provided Tai Chi demonstrations for the Office of Aging and Independence events is all of sudden isolated; no consulting with the 100+ participants, no feedback on the RFP evaluation process, just crickets.

This is a request to reconsider the termination of Dr. Mao's Tai Chi program at the East Columbia 50+ Center. It is also my understanding that Tai Chi was a significant part of the justification for the construction of the East Columbia 50+ Center and is a profitable partnership for the Center. It is unclear to me that while Howard County is progressive in addressing its growing senior population, the Howard County Office of Aging is terminating the program at the expiration of Dr. Mao's current contract on June 30, a Tai Chi program that started with one class and grew to seven levels of mastery, with a waiting list of willing participants. There are many rumors about the termination. Holding an open forum will provide the decision makers an opportunity to hear input from those who are affected and provide transparency and rationale in the decision-making process. Make no mistake, the desire is to reverse the decision to end Dr. Mao's Tai Chi program.

Sincerely,

Harry Dan
A Howard County Resident
Council District 2

Preserve Tai Chi under Dr. Ping Mao, East Columbia 50+

From jean.grady4@verizon.net <jean.grady4@verizon.net>

Date Sun 5/3/2026 7:58 AM

To Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>; Jung, Debra <djung@howardcountymd.gov>

Cc CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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Dear County Executive Dr. Ball and Councilmember Ms. Jung,

I am writing to urge you to take action to preserve tai chi under Dr. Ping Mao at the East Columbia 50+ center. I have not received a response from you or anyone in the county to the email I sent on this subject last week (see below). As I understand it, the county has no current plan to continue this highly popular and beneficial program for seniors past June of this year.

I remained disappointed and perplexed that the county would decide to discontinue this successful program. During the 50+ fitness solicitation earlier this year, my husband and many of my classmates wrote letters to the county procurement office strongly endorsing Dr. Ping Mao. Even without these letters, it should have been evident to the county that demand for this class is very high. A community of over 100 seniors regularly pay tuition fees to fill seven tai chi classes year round. Frequently, there have been seniors who have had to wait to start because classes are full.

Please quickly take action to assure our 50+ tai chi program continues into this summer and beyond. Don't let our community of seniors down. Show us that Howard County truly is the "best place to live, work, play, grow and thrive for all."

Sincerely,

Jean Grady



Activities & Programs

Check out our wide range of engaging programs and activities that promote social connection, lifelong learning, wellness, and active aging for older adults.

For information about facility closings or delays due to inclement weather, call [410-313-7777](tel:410-313-7777) (voice/relay).

[VIEW ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMS](#)



From Howard County website

To: cball@howardcountymd.gov <cball@howardcountymd.gov>

Cc: djung@howardcountymd.gov <djung@howardcountymd.gov>; Jrscott@howardcountymd.gov <jrscott@howardcountymd.gov>; oross@howardcountymd.gov <oross@howardcountymd.gov>; jrittenhouse@howardcountymd.gov <jrittenhouse@howardcountymd.gov>; mmadera@howardcountymd.gov <mmadera@howardcountymd.gov>

Sent: Monday, April 27, 2026 at 04:06:30 PM EDT

Subject: Please continue Tai Chi under Dr. Ping Mao, East Columbia 50+

Dear County Executive Dr. Ball,

I have been a resident of Howard County for 33 years and have taken 50+ tai chi instruction under Dr. Ping Mao for the past four years. I am very disappointed to hear of the county's plan to

dismantle the extremely popular and successful tai chi program under Dr. Ping Mao at the East Columbia 50+ Center.

What started as a single 50+ Tai Chi class under Dr. Ping Mao 19 years ago, has grown to seven current classes with 110 students at the East Columbia 50+Center. This popular program seems to be a shining example of success for the 50+ center.

Tai chi is an excellent fit for the 50+ center fitness classes as it's well established as an activity advised for older adults and has been shown to enhance aspects of overall fitness, health and cognition. Additionally, systematic documented reviews* of tai chi also indicate "excellent evidence of benefit for preventing falls, osteoarthritis, Parkinson disease, rehabilitation for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and improving cognitive capacity in older adults. There is good evidence of benefit for depression, cardiac and stroke rehabilitation and dementia."

Dr. Ping Mao has proven his expertise in and delivery of Tai Chi in a way that interests and motivates students. He trained in tai chi in China from a very young age. He has demonstrated the ability to teach tai chi to broad range of older individuals including a variety of fitness levels, and a range tai chi experience. He has structured the 50+ classes from beginner to more advanced students so students can correctly learn fundamental aspects before attempting the more complex. He lays out a program of progressive growth for the students while providing an appropriate challenge at each level. The large number of students enrolled in tai chi at the East Columbia 50+ speaks volumes on the attraction of his class content and methodology.

Finally, Dr. Ping Mao fosters community across his 50+ tai chi program. He devotes his personal time to organizing events for his students such as the outdoor International Tai Chi Day practice and lunch held the last Saturday of each April. He also plans annual winter holiday parties, Chinese New Year celebrations and much more. The students within and across his classes have come to know each other and we practice tai chi together outside of class. This tai chi program helps put the *community* into 50+ *community* center.

I am disappointed that such a popular and beneficial program is planned to be dismantled. Our tai chi classes have received no explanation from the county on why these changes are being made. Does the county understand the significant impact to this 50+ tai chi community of 110 students? I ask for your intervention and reconsideration of all options allow our full program of 50+ tai chi classes to continue.

Sincerely,

Jean Grady

*<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9844554/>

Re: Please reverse the decision to eliminate Tai Chi and please respond to our concerns.

From Liz <schoen.liz@gmail.com>

Date Sun 5/3/2026 7:30 PM

To Susan Keach Sweeney <skeachsweeney@gmail.com>

Cc Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>; CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>; Ping Mao <jpingmao@gmail.com>; winckels@gmail.com <winckels@gmail.com>; iomcastlerushen@gmail.com <iomcastlerushen@gmail.com>; robertengli@gmail.com <robertengli@gmail.com>; dboneducksfeet@msn.com <dboneducksfeet@msn.com>; razzaro@verizon.net <razzaro@verizon.net>; pcsegawa@yahoo.com <pcsegawa@yahoo.com>; kjgrady2626@gmail.com <kjgrady2626@gmail.com>; 54iomcastlerushen@gmail.com <54iomcastlerushen@gmail.com>; jean.grady4@verizon.net <jean.grady4@verizon.net>; paul.f.smith.1@gmail.com <paul.f.smith.1@gmail.com>; terriec53@gmail.com <terriec53@gmail.com>; stellawu902@gmail.com <stellawu902@gmail.com>; smcgscott@gmail.com <smcgscott@gmail.com>; annwings1@gmail.com <annwings1@gmail.com>; fflopresti@gmail.com <fflopresti@gmail.com>; rosa.pope@gmail.com <rosa.pope@gmail.com>; joleeharv@verizon.net <joleeharv@verizon.net>

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Another letter:

Dear Dr. Ball,

I am writing once again (third time) to urge you and the council to find very quickly a solution to restore Dr. Mao's program in full to the East Columbia Senior Center.

The elimination of his successful program is a travesty. Dr. Mao has been teaching at the East Columbia Center for 19 years and was an important advocate in the decision to build the new building.

How can a process have been put into place that ignores this history and the success of his program?

No one has responded to our letters or solicited our concerns. We deserve better than this.

It seems that Rock Steady Boxing for people with Parkinsons has been eliminated as well.

These programs are invaluable for the health and well being of seniors. This is a big mess and you need to find a solution.

Most sincerely, and with some anger,
Liz Schoen
410-908-0018
Resident of Howard County since 1985

On Sun, May 3, 2026 at 6:43 PM Susan Keach Sweeney <skeachsweeney@gmail.com> wrote:

The Honorable Calvin Ball cball@howardcountymd.gov
Members of the Howard County Council councilmail@howardcountymd.gov

SUBJECT: Please reverse the decision to eliminate Tai Chi and please respond to our concerns.

Dear Executive Ball and County Council members,

Tai Chi students have sent three rounds of letters either to people in the Office on Aging or the County Executive and County Council about the need to reverse the decision to eliminate the Tai Chi program led by Dr. Ping Mao at the 50+ Center. So far we have had no response except for one letter giving a cursory description of the procurement process. No one has responded to our concerns.

Many of the more than 110 participants in the Tai Chi program at the 50+ Center wrote letters before the decision was made asking the Office on Aging to continue the popular and hugely beneficial Tai Chi program. We did not receive any substantive response at all and there was no attempt to solicit input from participants. Apparently, rules of the County procurement process do not permit inclusion of more than a handful of constituency input letters. So most of our letters apparently were not considered.

Following the decision, many of us then wrote to you asking for some answers and asking to reverse the decision to keep the Tai Chi program. Again, no response.

We are asking for answers and also for a quick reversal of the decision. We need this Tai Chi program for our physical and mental health, which I thought was the purpose of the Office on Aging and part of Howard County's dedication to improving the quality of life for seniors. We are counting on you to respond to your constituents, in alignment with the County's commitments.

Thank you.

Respectfully yours,

Susan Keach Sweeney
skeachsweeney@gmail.com or
susankeach@comcast.net

CC: Dr. Ping Mao, Tai Chi students

P.S. I understand that the “Rock Steady Boxing for People with Parkinson’s” is also being discontinued. I recommend that officials look into this as well. Parkinson’s appears to be almost an epidemic among the senior population, so I don’t know why this would be discontinued.

Please reverse the decision to eliminate Tai Chi and please respond to our concerns.

From Susan Keach Sweeney <skeachsweeney@gmail.com>

Date Sun 5/3/2026 6:43 PM

To Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>; CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

Cc Ping Mao <jpingmao@gmail.com>; winckels@gmail.com <winckels@gmail.com>;
iomcastlerushen@gmail.com <iomcastlerushen@gmail.com>; robertengli@gmail.com
<robertengli@gmail.com>; dboneducksfeet@msn.com <dboneducksfeet@msn.com>; razzaro@verizon.net
<razzaro@verizon.net>; pcsegawa@yahoo.com <pcsegawa@yahoo.com>; kjgrady2626@gmail.com
<kjgrady2626@gmail.com>; 54iomcastlerushen@gmail.com <54iomcastlerushen@gmail.com>;
schoen.liz@gmail.com <schoen.liz@gmail.com>; jean.grady4@verizon.net <jean.grady4@verizon.net>;
paul.f.smith.1@gmail.com <paul.f.smith.1@gmail.com>; terriec53@gmail.com <terriec53@gmail.com>;
stellawu902@gmail.com <stellawu902@gmail.com>; smcgscott@gmail.com <smcgscott@gmail.com>;
annwings1@gmail.com <annwings1@gmail.com>; fflopresti@gmail.com <fflopresti@gmail.com>;
rosa.pope@gmail.com <rosa.pope@gmail.com>; joleeharv@verizon.net <joleeharv@verizon.net>;
npollack@comcast.net <npollack@comcast.net>

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The Honorable Calvin Ball cball@howardcountymd.gov
Members of the Howard County Council councilmail@howardcountymd.gov

SUBJECT: Please reverse the decision to eliminate Tai Chi and please respond to our concerns.

Dear Executive Ball and County Council members,

Tai Chi students have sent three rounds of letters either to people in the Office on Aging or the County Executive and County Council about the need to reverse the decision to eliminate the Tai Chi program led by Dr. Ping Mao at the 50+ Center. So far we have had no response except for one letter giving a cursory description of the procurement process. No one has responded to our concerns.

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We are asking for answers and also for a quick reversal of the decision. We need this Tai Chi program for our physical and mental health, which I thought was the purpose of the Office on Aging and part of Howard County's dedication to improving the quality of life for seniors. We are counting on you to respond to your constituents, in alignment with the County's commitments.

Thank you.

Respectfully yours,

Susan Keach Sweeney
skeachsweeney@gmail.com or
susankeach@comcast.net

CC: Dr. Ping Mao, Tai Chi students

P.S. I understand that the "Rock Steady Boxing for People with Parkinson's" is also being discontinued. I recommend that officials look into this as well. Parkinson's appears to be almost an epidemic among the senior population, so I don't know why this would be discontinued.

Restoration of Tai Chi classes to the East Columbia 50+ Center

From Paul Smith <paul.f.smith.1@gmail.com>

Date Mon 5/4/2026 7:49 PM

To Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>

Cc Ping Mao <jpingmao@gmail.com>; Susan Sweeny <susankeach@comcast.net>; CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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To the Honorable Calvin Ball and members of the County Council

This is my third email regarding the ending of Tai Chi classes at the East Columbia 50+ Center. The first was sent to Ms. Rittenhouse, the second to you. It is one of many sent by members of the current Tai Chi classes at the Center. These students have been poorly served by a seemingly arbitrary and unilateral decision by the Office of Aging and Independence to not renew the contract for classes taught by Dr. Jianping Mao. As you are aware, his contract ends in June. There is only a very short time to correct this problem.

Despite a number of emails to the Office by members of the classes during the selection process, the students wishes were ignored. Even worse, there was no attempt to explain the selection process, the results of the decision, the criteria used in the decision, the lack of inclusion of student input, or any potential alternatives.

The members of the classes have been kept completely in the dark about what happened, despite repeated queries. This does not seem the best practice for a government agency whose mission is to provide supporting services to seniors. This gives the students the impression that their needs are not being met, that the value of well established, successful programs is not considered, and reinforces the idea that they are not in control of their lives. Loss of control and instability are significant stressors to everyone, but especially to seniors. This approach to managing programs is in direct opposition to the goal of the Office of Aging and Independence.

Please address these issues with the Office. Please help them to find the time to listen to the community they serve. More transparency, accountability and communication are needed if the Office is to remain a useful agency within the County. The students deserve to know what happened, why it happened, and how it can be corrected.

Paul Smith

Attached below is my email to Ms. Rittenhouse on February 13:

Ms. Rittenhouse,

I am writing in support of continuation of the Tai Chi classes at the East Columbia Howard County 50 Plus Center, and its instructor, Dr. Ping Mao. These classes are in service to the senior community for the health benefits which have been confirmed by medical studies throughout the world over many years. In addition, the program leadership of Dr. Mao has fostered a sense of community and friendship between class members that provides an invaluable emotional bond for the people he has taught. He has organized group trips to China to visit the birthplace of Tai Chi. This has broadened the cultural horizons of the students, helping them better understand the people in other parts of the world, forging friendships with people they would not have met otherwise.

I have recently compared Dr. Mao's classes with other programs in Maryland and elsewhere in the country. I can easily say that his program is unique in many ways. Most community centers have either no Tai Chi classes, or one class per week. This results in a very limited exposure to Tai Chi concepts and movements. Dr. Mao has multiple classes at multiple skill levels. This creates a program which provides access to quality training from beginner level up through very advanced. His advanced students have reached a level where they could compete successfully in a tournament in China during one of the group trips. This set of classes allows the student to continue to grow and refine their skills over the years, making it possible to continue Tai Chi as an enjoyable lifetime practice.

I have studied Tai Chi with Dr. Mao since late 2009. I know first hand of his ability to adapt his teaching to support people of all skill levels and physical abilities. His passion and joy in teaching is matched by his skill in presenting subject matter which can become more complex as students progress farther in their studies. He can easily integrate physical and mental activities while keeping the class atmosphere relaxed and enjoyable. He is a constant positive influence to all the members of his classes and a role model of what Tai Chi can accomplish. In addition, he encourages his students to help each other, further building that sense of community between students.

To not continue this Tai Chi program would be a substantial loss to the community at large. Dr. Mao and his classes are a benefit far beyond spending an hour at a class each week. His teaching has impacted every day of his student's lives. Please do not allow this critical service to be lost.

Paul Smith

Re: Tai Chi Program at East Columbia 50+

From Arlene Blume <arlene.blume@yahoo.com>

Date Mon 5/4/2026 3:11 AM

To CouncilDistrict2@howardcountymd.gov <CouncilDistrict2@howardcountymd.gov>; Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>; CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

Cc Harry <dboneducksfeet@msn.com>; Ping Mao <jpingmao@gmail.com>; Doug Hanewinkel <winckels@gmail.com>; Brent Warner <iomcastlerushen@gmail.com>; Robert English <robertengli@gmail.com>; Richard Azzaro <razzaro@verizon.net>; Pam <pcsegawa@yahoo.com>; Kevin Grady <kjgrady2626@gmail.com>; Cris Warner <54iomcastlerushen@gmail.com>; Liz Schoen <schoen.liz@gmail.com>; Jean Grady <jean.grady4@verizon.net>; Paul Smith <paul.f.smith.1@gmail.com>; Terrie Cunningham <terrie53@gmail.com>; Stella Wu <stellawu902@gmail.com>; Susan Scott <smcgscott@gmail.com>; Ann Wing <annwings1@gmail.com>; FranLoPresti <fflopresti@gmail.com>; Rosa <rosa.pope@gmail.com>; Joan Harvery <joleeharv@verizon.net>; Nelson <npollack@comcast.net>

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I started my own letter asking that the Howard County Department of Aging decision to abandon the Tai Chi Program at East Columbia be reversed, but find that Harry Dan's letter says almost everything that I would want to say. I am endorsing it.

A few key points:

- * This tai chi program has grown with the East Columbia 50+ Center and is an integral part of the center that draws participants from across the county.
- * Tai chi cannot be taught at a single level in a one size fits all class, but classes must be tailored to fit the experience, training, and physical condition of the participants.

Arlene Blume
District 2 resident

On May 3, 2026, at 8:22 PM, Susan Keach Sweeney <susankeach@comcast.net> wrote:

Wow!!! This is great, Harry!!!! So comprehensive!!!

Susan

Susan Keach Sweeney
susankeach@comcast.net
443-756-6231

On 05/03/2026 7:55 PM EDT Harry . <dboneducksfeet@msn.com> wrote:

Here is a copy of the letter I sent today:

May 03, 2026

Honorable Calvin Ball and members of the Howard County Council,

I have been a resident of Howard County for over 35 years, and since retirement I've participated in Tai Chi classes offered for seniors at the East Columbia 50+ Center. I have recently learned that the Howard County Office of Aging and Independence has decided NOT to award instructor Jian Ping Mao, a Howard County resident, a contract to continue teaching Tai Chi classes at the Howard County East Columbia 50+ Center. It is my understanding that the Request For Proposal (RFP) did not clearly call out the criteria for evaluation, and there has been little to no feedback in the process. It is ironic that if you visit the Office of Aging website (https://www.howardcountymd.gov/aging-independence#_0-centers) you clearly see advertise under "activities and programs" a picture of instructor Jian Pin Mao leading a Tai Chi activity:

MENU

Person icon

Building icon

Network icon

Facebook icon



Twitter icon



Message icon

Activities & Programs

Check out our wide range of engaging programs and activities that promote social connection, lifelong learning, wellness, and active aging for older adults.

For information about facility closings or delays due to inclement weather, call 410-313-7777 (voice/relay).

[VIEW ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMS](#)  



What began as a single Tai Chi "class" in, at the time, a very modest 3,800 square foot facility to over 110 students in a 29,000 square feet East Columbia 50+ Center. Along the way Dr. Mao garnered media coverage for his Tai Chi class:

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/2017/12/07/tai-chi-at-columbia-east-50-center/>

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/2017/12/14/surprises-greet-howard-county-50-centers-tai-chi-class-in-china/>

<https://www.thebeaconnewspapers.com/international-tai-chi-champions/>

When talks of building a new facility began, Dr. Mao and his Tai Chi students/members vigorously campaigned in support of a new building to host the growing interest in Tai Chi. Members wrote letters and attended meetings/hearings. It is my understanding that at one such hearing, sixty (60) members attended (some wearing the traditional Tai Chi attire) to provide testimonies on the value of such an infrastructure to serve the community.

Dr. Mao has clearly demonstrated his expertise and ability to teach Tai Chi in a way that interests and motivates students where they will continue to return each session and advance. I would argue that Dr. Mao has created a "**program**" with **seven** levels of instructions much like an athletic program divided into levels of play from beginner to intermediate to advanced. Instead of "one class fits all", Dr. Mao offers classes dependent on the student's level of mastery. For a beginner, this would reduce a student's potential frustration with not being able to keep up with more advanced students and allow them to establish fundamentals and grow confidence. At the same time, this provides more advanced students with challenges to progress in the Tai Chi practice. He adapts his techniques to the needs of various fitness levels and physical limitations.

There are numerous articles touting Tai Chi practice for its physical benefits and also for its cognitive functioning benefits. Recent studies also advocate the importance of social interactions for the overall well-being of the senior population. Dr. Mao's program is unique in that it not only provides a service (teaching multiple levels of Tai Chi) but also a community. The interaction of Dr. Mao's Tai Chi students continues beyond the class. He often organizes regular events to bring members of the various levels together in intertwined activities, creating a large community of students who actively support each other. This may involve supporting a fellow member with emotional support (loss of loved ones), life changing events (home destroyed by fire), to holiday celebrations with a group meal event involving over

60+ members. Dr. Mao has even organized trips to the birthplace of Tai Chi as noted in the news articles. Multiple trips have taken place, and these are not the same trip. He works with a tour company to customize the trips to include the regular tourist destination and also other lesser known venues, not only bonding the students but also broadening their cultural horizons. The group has participated in World Tai Chi Day and various demonstrations. These are small examples of how the program works to connect a community of Tai Chi practitioners and reduce isolation.

There are not many offerings that provide the level of benefits that Dr. Mao's Tai Chi program provides. It is distressing to learn that his application to the RFP was not accepted and that the many levels of Tai Chi classes will end come June 30. It is interesting that a group that supported the building of the East Columbia 50+ Center and provided Tai Chi demonstrations for the Office of Aging and Independence events is all of sudden isolated; no consulting with the 100+ participants, no feedback on the RFP evaluation process, just crickets.

This is a request to reconsider the termination of Dr. Mao's Tai Chi program at the East Columbia 50+ Center. It is also my understanding that Tai Chi was a significant part of the justification for the construction of the East Columbia 50+ Center and is a profitable partnership for the Center. It is unclear to me that while Howard County is progressive in addressing its growing senior population, the Howard County Office of Aging is terminating the program at the expiration of Dr. Mao's current contract on June 30, a Tai Chi program that started with one class and grew to seven levels of mastery, with a waiting list of willing participants. There are many rumors about the termination. Holding an open forum will provide the decision makers an opportunity to hear input from those who are affected and provide transparency and rationale in the decision-making process. Make no mistake, the desire is to reverse the decision to end Dr. Mao's Tai Chi program.

Sincerely,

Harry Dan
A Howard County Resident
Council District 2

From: Ping Mao <jpingmao@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, May 1, 2026 10:28 PM

To: Doug Hanewinckel <swinkels@gmail.com>; Brent Warner <iomcastlerushen@gmail.com>; Robert English <robertengli@gmail.com>; Harry <dboneducksfeet@msn.com>; Richard Azzaro <razzaro@verizon.net>; Pam <pcsegawa@yahoo.com>; Kevin Grady <kjgrady2626@gmail.com>; Cris Warner <54iomcastlerushen@gmail.com>; Liz Schoen <schoen.liz@gmail.com>; Jean Grady <jean.grady4@verizon.net>; Paul Smith <paul.f.smith.1@gmail.com>; Terrie Cunningham <terriec53@gmail.com>; Stella Wu <stellawu902@gmail.com>; Susan Scott <smcgscott@gmail.com>; Ann Wing <annwings1@gmail.com>; FranLoPresti <fflopresti@gmail.com>; Rosa <rosa.pope@gmail.com>; Joan Harvery <joleeharv@verizon.net>; Nelson <npollack@comcast.net>; Carolyn Powers <powersfamily1111@gmail.com>; Rita <rcohen0126@aol.com>; Jeanette Jenkins <steelmag1@gmail.com>; Jill Carter <adrieneeric@gmail.com>; Benjamin Tsui <tsuibenjamin@gmail.com>; Yui-han <yhlee1225@hotmail.com>; Pat <intruder54@verizon.net>; Bill <Whjones1@verizon.net>; Salina <brianmom72@gmail.com>; Lenore <libk029@gmail.com>; Linh Cheong <linhcheong@gmail.com>; Toshiko Baer <tkb6261@yahoo.com>; Isabelle Lanini <ilaniniweb@gmail.com>; Young Yang <kusamonochoe@gmail.com>; Mabel Canada <mabelcanada@gmail.com>; RITA Moy <rjmoy297@comcast.net>; Timothy <tcarr4444@gmail.com>; Tom Kurcz <kurcz@msn.com>; Bill Moser <bixs13@verizon.net>; Eilene Brocenos <EILENE@brocenos.com>; Kathy <kkluskey@yahoo.com>; Ron Mihalcin <ronmihalcin@gmail.com>; Elaine Blackman <Zubby122@hotmail.com>; Nancy <nancysguerra@hotmail.com>; Ken & Cynthia Barnes <barneske@verizon.net>; Eric Butler <butleer@gmail.com>; Janet <janet@schreibmail.com>; Diane Moser <arnold5064@verizon.net>; Barry Brown <brownasb1@msn.com>; Jessica Peirce <jessica_peirce@yahoo.com>; David Kempner <davidarikempner@gmail.com>; Peggy Wong <my_nest@verizon.net>; Beverly Johnson <BJOHNSON1000@comcast.net>; Mimi Owens <mignon.owens@yahoo.com>; Rosanne Tingley <Rosesandbri@gmail.com>; Robert Fleishamn <b.fleish18@gmail.com>; Arlene Blume <arlene.blume@yahoo.com>; Carolyn Parsa <cparsa@gmail.com>; Stephen Tuss <stuss00@comcast.net>; Najad Tuffaha <najadht@gmail.com>; Rosemary <rosemary5559@gmail.com>; Alberta Coleman <ascole1@outlook.com>; Alexandra Cargo <dpcargo1@comcast.net>; Mavis Ellis <mavisellis@gmail.com>; Mona Lucks <monamae@comcast.net>; Eric Kelley <ericdkelley60@gmail.com>; Robert Harding <rob-harding@comcast.net>; Rich Burner <RB789MAIL@gmail.com>; Alfred Bracey <bracey@comcast.net>; Renee <Renee6015@gmail.com>; Diane & Andy Green <diandyg@gmail.com>; Demetria Gordon <uthknact4u@gmail.com>; Larry LEHMANN <lehmannll@verizon.net>; Marlene/Dennis Blair <Mardenb@comcast.net>; Steve Lucas <lucas3985@gmail.com>; Cindi Wood <cwood100@comcast.net>; Andrew Green <andrewvangreen@yahoo.com>; Richard Roland <Highriderat@gmail.com>; Susan Sweeny <susankeach@comcast.net>; Garry Chandler <gmchandler133@gmail.com>; Adriene Harding <ahardin2@gmail.com>; Jeffrey Thompson <Allinall61@proton.me>; Machella Urbina <machellau@yahoo.com>; Maria Fedynsky <uhliarka@yahoo.com>; Ena Smith <enavitorias45@hotmail.com>; Ann Taubenheim <amtaub75@gmail.com>; John Thornton <clerbus@aim.com>; Bud and RoseMarie Deming <terrapi63@comcast.net>; Steven Lewis <swlewis69@verizon.net>; Ahni Vanek <ahnivanek@verizon.net>; Nancy Kutler <nancy.kutler@gmail.com>; Dorsetta Lewis <dorsettarenee@gmail.com>; Dennettaafaf <Dennettaafaf@gmail.com>; Edwina Hunter <edwina.hunter@gmail.com>; Lisa Bankman <lisabankman@gmail.com>; Beverly Lucas <beverlyD.lucas@gmail.com>; Ed Kutler <ed@thekutlergroup.com>; Jackie Buist <bujaja2016@yahoo.com>; David Place <davidaplace@yahoo.com>; Jim Hunter <jamesedwinahunter@gmail.com>; Judith Tyler <judithtyler325@gmail.com>; Holly Crawford <hcrawford6512@gmail.com>; Steve Ahlbrand <steve.ahlbrand@verizon.net>

Subject: Fwd: Keep those letters coming

FYI

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Susan Keach Sweeney** <susankeach@comcast.net>
Date: Fri, May 1, 2026 at 9:57 PM
Subject: Keep those letters coming
To: Fran LoPresti <fflopresti@gmail.com>, Ping Mao <jpingmao@gmail.com>
Cc: <jean.grady4@verizon.net>

Dear East Columbia 50+ Tai Chi Community

Thank you. A heartfelt thank you for the emails you have sent to support continuation of 50+ Tai Chi under Ping Mao. We know that, through your efforts, the county now recognizes that there is a 50+ community that is being disenfranchised by their decision to discontinue this highly popular and beneficial program. However, there has been no resolution proposed, decided upon or communicated to either Ping or our Tai Chi community. If you are not sure about what has taken place, see the attached Tai Chi Decision Background. The problem can be solved if we keep the pressure on.

Our previous input, before the decision, was largely not considered. Most of our earlier letters went to Jenny Rittenhouse in procurement. Unfortunately, very few letters made it to the evaluators due to procurement limitation rules. Most of those letters sent from our community supporting Ping's 50+ Tai Chi were not used.

Keep those letters coming. Please write a letter (a follow-up or your first) this weekend. We want our county officials to see they still have a problem to fix when they open their email in-boxes Monday morning.

Send your letter to the county exec Calvin Ball, the County Council as a whole, and your County Council representative:

- The Honorable Calvin Ball - cball@howardcountymd.gov
- councilmail@howardcountymd.gov
- Your own County Council member <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/council-members/contact-us>

Some possible thoughts to include in your upcoming letter (either follow-up or first) to be emailed this weekend (May 2 or 3):

- Ask for an urgent resolution to this situation before July 1.
- Remind them that you've written (if you did) before but didn't hear a response or a plan to resolve. Attach your original letter if you wrote one.
- You may want to ask how this could have happened, and especially without any input from the 50+ community.
- Maybe ask to have someone come and meet with the Tai Chi community.
- It's fine to keep your letters short. A couple paragraphs are fine to emphasize the key points.
- Feel free to borrow ideas from letters others have sent.

Again, prepare your next short email and send it this weekend (May 2 or 3). Thank you again to all of your help in this.

Your fellow students,

Susan Keach Sweeney
Jean Grady

Tai chi classes East Columbia 50+ Center

From Rosa Pope <rosa.pope@gmail.com>

Date Mon 5/4/2026 8:49 AM

To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>; Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>; CouncilDistrict4@howardcountymd.gov <CouncilDistrict4@howardcountymd.gov>

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It has come to our attention that the various levels of tai chi classes at East Columbia 50+ Center will be eliminated at the end of June. My classmates and I wrote many letters requesting clarification and consultation from the Office on Aging and Recreation and Parks Department in order to reverse this decision but have not been told why the various levels of this popular program are being eliminated. Tai chi cannot be taught on a "one-level-fits all" basis.

Furthermore, it is quite puzzling why this program is being eliminated since it has been highlighted in local publications such as the Baltimore Sun, the Beacon and the Business Journal Monthly, among others, as a model of programming for the active elderly in our community.

These tai chi classes draw students from all over Howard County to the East Columbia Center. We seniors come from all walks of life and professional backgrounds and I am sure if we worked together to use our collective wisdom we could find a viable solution to continue offering the various levels of this highly popular program to the community. Please look into this matter at your earliest convenience- the new catalog will be out at the end of June and needs to be planned now. Thank you.