Support of CB58-2026

CB58 deserves support because it strengthens taxpayer protections through a practical, scaled compliance framework for nonprofits. It creates clearer grant conditions, public visibility, and repayment remedies while tailoring reporting to an organization's size and grant risk.

CB58-2026 addresses oversight gaps that have cost Howard County taxpayers. The $25 million grant to Columbia Community Concepts for "The Source" shows the risk of grant agreements without enforceable conditions, fiscal controls, or recovery mechanisms. Section 22.705(B)(11) would require full repayment if property is repurposed within 10 years, helping ensure public dollars continue to serve their intended purpose.

The bill's two-tier reporting structure avoids overburdening smaller organizations. Nonprofits with less than $500,000 in charitable contributions would submit a program report and compiled financial statements, while larger organizations would provide an audit. This makes review proportionate to grant risk and organizational scale.

Section 22.707 would create a public grants database showing where County grant money goes, what it funds, and whether nonprofits meet their obligations. A centralized, searchable system would improve public oversight and reduce the risk that problems remain hidden until funds are spent.

Section 22.705(B)(3) requires nonprofits receiving real property grants to provide a 25% match from private or non-County sources. This ensures the County is not the sole funder and shows outside support before major public investment.

Section 22.705(B)(8) bars lump-sum payments and instead ties funding to construction milestones.

This protects taxpayers if a project stalls or fails. Section 22.705(B)(7) adds real-time fiscal monitoring during the grant period, rather than relying only on after-the-fact audits.

Section 22.701(D) requires disclosure of employment contracts with registered lobbyists, adding transparency when grant applicants also pay lobbyists to influence officials involved in grant policy or funding decisions.

Nonprofits have asked for a more transparent system, as Council Member Jung noted in the Baltimore Sun. Section 22.706 would create a single application platform with standardized forms, reducing duplication and making the process fairer for organizations without insider knowledge of each department's procedures.

Section 22.700(a)'s two-year experience requirement helps ensure public funds go to organizations with a track record of delivering the services being funded.

The 61-day effective date gives the County Administration and nonprofit community time to prepare. The Chief Administrative Officer would build the platform and database, allowing phased implementation.

Comparable grant systems show CB58's core requirements are not unusual. Other Maryland counties already use experience thresholds, financial reporting, staffing disclosures, post-award review, construction safeguards, or centralized grant systems.

Frederick County uses experience requirements; Prince George's County requires financial statements; Anne Arundel County requires staffing and contractor information; and Montgomery County uses an online grant system. CB58 brings similar accountability tools into Howard County's code, including financial reporting, staffing disclosures, construction safeguards, and a central grant database.

For these reasons, CB58-2026 should be adopted. It protects public funds, improves access to grant information, and gives nonprofits a more predictable and transparent process.

Angela F. Bruce

Rebuilding Together
Howard County

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WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION

Howard County Council Bill No. 58-2026

Public Hearing on September 22, 2026

Submitted by Christy Page, Chief Development Officer
Rebuilding Together Howard County

Good evening, Council Members. My name is Christy Page, and I am the Chief Development Officer for Rebuilding Together Howard County. I am testifying on behalf of our Executive Director, Ann Heavner; our board of directors; our dedicated staff; and the thousands of low-income homeowners, volunteers, and community partners who make up our Rebuilding Together Howard County family.

We respectfully appear today in opposition to Bill No. 58-2026.

Who We Are

For 34 years, Rebuilding Together Howard County has had one singular focus: meeting the critical home repair needs of our county's most vulnerable residents at no cost to them. We are proud to be part of Rebuilding Together, the nation's largest nonprofit organization dedicated to the rehabilitation of residential structures, with 106 affiliates serving communities across the United States.

Our services are available to all low-income county residents, regardless of where they live in Howard County. We provide critical home repairs, home safety modifications, volunteer handyperson services, and a rapid-response urgent repair program.

The results speak for themselves. For every dollar invested in Rebuilding Together Howard County, the community sees a return of **$2.85.** And because we are committed to preservation and maximizing impact, **for the cost of building one new home, we can repair 18.**

A Partnership That Is Working

Rebuilding Together Howard County is deeply grateful for the county's partnership and financial support through the Department of Community Resources and Services and the Department of Housing and Community Development. That investment is making a measurable difference in the lives of our neighbors.

Over the past 12 months, **demand for our services has increased by 60%.** With the county's continued commitment, we are rising to meet that growing need and are delivering high-quality repairs that result in homeowners living in environments that are safe, healthy, and stable.

Our Concerns with Bill 58-2026

We recognize that this council is motivated by a desire to strengthen accountability and transparency in the county's grant-making process. We share those values. It is precisely because we share them that we are here today. We believe this bill as currently written would impose significant burdens on the nonprofits serving Howard County residents without producing a meaningful gain in accountability.

1. New Audit Requirements Are Duplicative and Create Unnecessary Costs

Bill 58-2026 would require nonprofits with gross income from charitable contributions of $500,000 or more to submit an independent audit report as a condition of receiving county grant funding. The State of Maryland already requires independent audits for nonprofits receiving $750,000 or more in gross contributions under state law.

Howard County's proposed threshold is significantly lower than the state standard. This creates a situation where Howard County nonprofits would be held to a stricter standard than the state of Maryland itself requires. It simply does not make sense for county grant compliance to exceed the framework that state regulators have already deemed sufficient.

Independent audits are expensive, typically costing between $8,000 and $15,000 or more. For a nonprofit like Rebuilding Together Howard County, those funds do not come from reserves held apart from our mission. They come directly from the resources we would otherwise direct toward repairs for our neighbors. Every dollar diverted to these new compliance standards would be a dollar that cannot go toward a leaking roof, a broken furnace, or a wheelchair ramp for a homeowner who desperately needs it.

2. The Administrative Burden Is Overwhelming for Nonprofits and for the County

Beyond audit requirements, Bill 58-2026 introduces new application and reporting obligations. Each requirement adds administrative time and cost.

Rebuilding Together Howard County is a lean, mission-driven organization. Our team is already working at capacity to keep pace with a 60% increase in demand for our services. These are not minor process adjustments. They are real operational burdens that will divert time and resources away from the work our neighbors are counting on us to do.

The county itself would also bear significant new costs: building, expanding, and maintaining the centralized platform and database, processing substantially increased documentation from every grantee, and conducting expanded post-award reviews. At a time when both nonprofit organizations and county government face resource constraints, this approach is not cost-effective stewardship of public investment.

3. Existing Accountability Mechanisms Are Already Working

Rebuilding Together Howard County has a 34-year track record of accountability, transparency, and demonstrated community impact in Howard County. We already submit detailed program reports, financial records, and outcome data to our county partners. We comply with all applicable state and federal reporting requirements.

The accountability mechanisms the county needs are already in place. Adding layers of new requirements does not make service-delivery organizations like ours more accountable. It makes us less able to serve our neighbors.

What We Are Asking For

For all of these reasons, Rebuilding Together Howard County respectfully requests that the Council reject Bill No. 58-2026 as currently drafted.

We are committed partners in this county's effort to build a stronger, more effective grants process. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Council and county staff to identify reforms that strengthen accountability without imposing unnecessary costs and burdens on the organizations delivering services to Howard County residents every day.

One concrete reform we would enthusiastically support is the expansion of multi-year grant agreements. Rebuilding Together Howard County recently received multi-year grants from HUD and the State of Maryland. These arrangements are significantly more efficient to administer on both sides of the relationship, allow for stronger long-term planning and program continuity, and ultimately produce greater, more sustained impact for the community. We would welcome the Council's leadership in exploring this approach for Howard County's grant programs.

Conclusion

Rebuilding Together Howard County exists to ensure that every resident of this county has a warm, safe, and dry place to call home. That work depends on our ability to direct our time, our energy, and our funding toward repairing homes, revitalizing communities, and rebuilding lives. We respectfully ask the Council to protect that ability by declining to pass Bill No. 58-2026.

Thank you for your time, your partnership, and your continued commitment to the residents of Howard County.

Christy Page
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ORAL TESTIMONY

Opposing Bill No. 58-2026 · September 22, 2026

Good evening. My name is Christy Page, and I am the Chief Development Officer for Rebuilding Together Howard County. I am testifying in opposition to Bill No. 58-2026 on behalf of our board of directors, our Executive Director Ann Heavner, and the low-income homeowners we are privileged to serve.

For 34 years, Rebuilding Together Howard County has done one thing: provide no-cost critical home repairs to the neighbors who need them most. Over the past 12 months alone, demand for our services has increased by 60%. The county's financial support has been essential to our ability to meet that demand, and we are profoundly grateful for this partnership.

We deeply respect the Council's commitment to sound stewardship of public funds. We share those values. But we believe this bill, as written, would place an undue administrative burden on nonprofits like ours without meaningfully improving accountability.

Bill 58-2026 would require nonprofits with $500,000 or more in charitable contributions to undergo an independent audit just to receive county grant funding. The State of Maryland does not require an independent audit unless a nonprofit receives $750,000 or more. Why should Howard County hold its nonprofits to a stricter standard than the state of Maryland itself? Independent audits cost between $8,000 and $15,000. That money would deplete the funding that would otherwise go to a family's broken furnace or a senior's wheelchair ramp. This is especially harrowing in a time when nonprofits are increasingly scrutinized for overhead expenditures and being asked to "do more with less."

Beyond audits, compensation disclosures and expanded post-award requirements add real administrative burden at a time when our team is already stretched thin responding to growing community need.

Rebuilding Together Howard County has a 34-year record of accountability and transparency. The county already has the oversight tools it needs. This bill would create is more paperwork and staff time, but not better outcomes for Howard County residents.

We respectfully ask the Council to reject this bill. We offer ourselves as willing partners in designing a grant process that works better for everyone. One reform we would champion: multi-year grant agreements. We recently received multi-year grants from HUD and the State of Maryland. These arrangements are more efficient, allow for better long-term planning, and produce greater impact for our neighbors. We would welcome the Council's leadership in exploring this for Howard County.

Thank you.

<u>Testimony Against CB58-2026 - Dawn Popp</u>

Good evening, Council Members.

My name is Dawn Popp and I live in D1, in Elkridge. I am testifying in my individual capacity, but I am also a member of the Board of the Columbia Democratic Club and join in their testimony this evening, and I'm a member of the Board of HopeWorks of Howard County, and a signatory to that organization's written testimony.

To be clear, transparency, accountability, and responsible stewardship of public funds are important. But CB58 appears to have been hastily drafted, with insufficient consideration of its practical impact, and without consultation with the people and organizations who will actually have to implement and comply with its requirements. The result is a bill that burdens an already-stretched nonprofit sector and already-understaffed county grants offices, and creates a number of (presumably) unintended consequences, while doing little to actually improve oversight.

Here are just a few examples.

First, the public database requirements are particularly troubling. For an organization like HopeWorks, which provides confidential services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, this well-intentioned but half-baked attempt to provide additional transparency presents very real safety concerns. CB58 would require publication of information about programs, participants, and service locations, including emergency shelters, with no provision for exceptions or redaction of sensitive information. Before this Council mandates a public database, you must ensure it includes appropriate protections for the vulnerable residents these grants ultimately serve, which means taking the time to consult with organizations like HopeWorks about how best to do so.

Second, the two-year experience requirement is also highly problematic. Requiring two years of experience delivering the specific services to be funded will stifle innovation and prevent organizations from being able to rapidly respond to new and emergent community needs. We need to remember why the ability to respond quickly matters. **How many emergency grants awarded after the Ellicott City flooding - or during the COVID-19 public health emergency - would have been blocked if these requirements had been in place?** In an emergency, we need our nonprofits to be able to respond to changing circumstances—not a system that says, "You haven't done this exact work for two years, so you aren't eligible."

Third, the implementation timeline raises significant concerns. CB58 takes effect 61 days after enactment, but it requires building an entirely new centralized application platform, a new standardized form, and a public database with detailed requirements. That cannot realistically happen in 61 days. The bill says nothing about what happens to grants already in the pipeline in the meantime — leaving nonprofits that depend on this funding for basic operations in limbo.

Council Members, this bill is not simply about paperwork. It affects whether nonprofits can respond to emerging needs, how quickly they can deliver services, and whether vulnerable residents can receive those services safely.

I therefore urge you to **vote against CB58**.

Thank you.

Bridges TO HOUSING STABILITY

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO CB58-2026
September 22, 2026

Good evening, Chairperson and members of the County Council, and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Jessamine Duvall and I am the Executive Director of Bridges to Housing Stability. Bridges respectfully opposes CB58-2026 because it will create administrative and financial burdens for local nonprofits and increase the workload of County staff yet offers no concrete benefits to Howard County residents.

As you probably know, Bridges plays a crucial role in the county's Coordinated Entry System for homelessness, providing vital programs to house our most vulnerable residents and help them achieve housing stability. We also manage 62 affordable rental properties countywide that provide low-income and workforce housing for county residents. Such as it is, if Bridges did not receive County grant funding to provide these services, they would be unavailable to county residents.

This year, Bridges was awarded 11 grants from the Howard County Government to operate our Homeless Services programs and maintain our affordable housing stock. That's 11 detailed applications, 11 different grant agreements to sign and comply with, 12 separate project budgets to create and manage, and 44 grant reports to submit over the course of one year – just for our county grants. In fact, we have a full-time employee who spends about half her time managing our county grant applications, agreements, tracking, reporting, and compliance. Bridges pays tens of thousands of dollars each year simply to manage the funds we receive from the County. I am not complaining – I am very grateful for the County's support of our mission and that Bridges has the budget and staff capacity to manage multiple grants. However, many smaller local nonprofits do not.

As proposed, CB58 will codify an administrative process, complicate grant applications, and require more nonprofit staff and financial resources. Smaller organizations will suffer most. Many will need to hire outside accounting or consulting support just to meet the new requirements, reducing resources available for direct services and increasing their administrative costs.

The most disturbing part of this bill is the proposed requirement of a financial audit for nonprofits with $500,000 or more in charitable contributions. This standard is far more stringent than the State's and will be difficult for local nonprofits to meet. When charities register with the state of Maryland, an annual audit is only required when contributions exceed $1,000,000. When contributions are between $400,000 and $1,000,000,[1] charities submit a financial review, which costs significantly less than a full audit.

The proposed centralized grant platform is a great idea -- but not as it is presented here. This project will be costly and will require staff training, technology support, data maintenance, compliance review, and public records administration. CB58 includes no additional funding or staffing to support this project, nor does it acknowledge that the county's current software system, Neighborly, is still being implemented – or that county offices providing grant funding are not adequately staffed. Importantly, publishing grant reports in a public database threatens the privacy of clients receiving services and does not offer any clear benefit to the county or to the nonprofits executing county programs.

Lastly, the two-year operating requirement for new nonprofits will hinder the county's ability to support new solutions for emerging needs. There are several brand-new nonprofits in the county that are providing sorely needed advocacy, basic needs, and human services for residents who are struggling to stay afloat in an increasingly unstable world. We should encourage innovative, people-first solutions to our county's challenges – not stifle them.

At Bridges, we fully support transparency and accountability around the use of government funding, but we also know that CB58 is not necessary to achieve this. Almost every requirement detailed in the Grant Agreements section is already part of county agreements. The items added to the Grant Application and Pre-Award Evaluation section either exist already or only apply to building projects. This bill is a solution without a problem.

Instead, the County should step back and analyze how other local jurisdictions handle grants, then allocate funds to study, recommend, and implement best practices. This process would be best handled at the administrative level, not through legislation -- and must include the input of nonprofit partners at all stages to ensure that any new processes that increase accountability also improve access to grant funding.

In closing, please consider the negative impact this bill will have on the County's nonprofit partners and hard-working county employees and vote unfavorably on CB58-2026. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessamine Duvall
Executive Director
Bridges to Housing Stability

[1] COR-92 form; https://sos.maryland.gov/Documents/COR-92.pdf

Testimony on Columbia Democratic Club Opposition to CB58-2026

September 22, 2026

Good evening, Chairperson and members of the Council.

My name is Linda Lampert Leslie, and I am the president of the Columbia Democratic Club. Our almost 200 club members lead and support a wide range of nonprofits across the county, and of course as taxpayers we care deeply about how our tax dollars are used for grants. CB58 was the topic of our most recent monthly meeting. After discussion, the club voted unanimously to oppose this legislation. Tonight I would like to briefly share our greatest concerns.

Let me start by emphasizing that CDC members absolutely support the goal of making sure County funds are used responsibly and that organizations receiving public dollars are accountable.

Our concern is that this bill goes beyond reasonable accountability and could create significant barriers for the very nonprofits that Howard County relies on to serve our community.

Our first major concern is the requirement that a nonprofit have at least two years of experience providing services specifically related to the grant it is seeking.

Our concern is that this requirement could create a barrier to innovative solutions for our community.

A nonprofit could have years of experience serving Howard County, understand an emerging community need, and have the capacity to develop a new program. But under this requirement, it could be ineligible for County funding simply because it has not already been doing that exact work for two years.

You can't gain two years of experience in a new program unless you are given the opportunity to start the program.

We should be careful about creating a grant system that unintentionally favors organizations that are already established in a particular program area and makes it harder for innovative approaches to emerge.

Our second concern is the sheer amount of administrative work this bill would place on nonprofits.

The requirements include providing extensive financial, organizational, personnel, programmatic, and cost information, along with additional reporting, potential audits, public documentation, and independent audits for certain organizations.

For a large nonprofit with dedicated compliance and finance staff, these requirements may be manageable.

For a small or mid-sized nonprofit, it can be a significant expense and drain on staff time, if the organization even has staff.

Every hour and every dollar spent meeting administrative requirements is an hour or dollar that is not being spent serving Howard County residents.

Finally, we question whether this level of additional regulation is proportionate to an identified problem.

Howard County already has grant applications, grant agreements, reporting requirements, and financial oversight mechanisms.

If there are specific problems with how County grant funds are being managed, we believe those problems should be addressed with targeted reforms rather than imposing a broad new compliance structure on every nonprofit receiving County funding.

This bill also appears to have grown out of concern for a current project that's already underway. The sponsor has publicly commented on this project quite a bit recently, but since this legislation will not take effect retroactively, it reads like more of a virtue signal than a way to address concerns.

Howard County benefits from a nonprofit sector that is diverse, community-based, innovative, and responsive.

We believe we can protect taxpayer dollars while also making sure smaller organizations can compete for County funding and nonprofits have the flexibility to respond to new community needs.

For those reasons, we respectfully ask the Council to oppose CB58-2026.

Thank you.

The People's Voice, LLC
Ethics Ballot ™

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The People's Voice -

C58 – 2026 – Oppose

This Bill has vastly increased requirements even to apply for a small grant. Why the targeting of non-profits is the first question. The requirement that "sufficient source of funds" outside the grant, and having 25% procured in advance of construction costs, would eliminate so many entities from being able to be considered for these projects. Basically saying that all construction grants will only fund up to 75% of the cost of construction, whether a PPP or not. For expensive projects especially, this is very limiting.

Taking away department or agency involvement at any step is moving away from important expertise. Hopefully, the centralized system proposed is only for IT and easier public access purposes.

Requiring 2 years of tax returns without notation of extensions needed, nor even related to amounts of grants is particularly onerous. Many entities would likely not even apply for small amounts if they had to take on all these new financial disclosures, at expense of time and resources. There is an extra note that "legally connected" entities must give the returns also. That term needs to be clearly defined, as obviously no entity can give tax returns that they do not have the legal authority to provide. A requirement of including all "financial details" of charitable "activities" implies a degree of detail that even the IRS does not require, including new financial information, available to the public, of staff compensation, employment contracts, overhead and administrative costs, assets and debts. Are any of these areas currently allowed to not be disclosed due to the existence of proprietary information to allow best practices in industry marketing and competition? Not to mention personal privacy issues for employees, donors even victims being assisted. Are we just throwing that protection away wholesale if you are a non-profit? Do non-profits have to list all their silent auction bids, raffle ticket purchasers, or donors to their bingos? What does "charitable activities" mean?

County departments and agencies have different grants with different requirements for a reason. Not all grants are the same, require the same oversight, not to mention amounts so as to have all fall under the same degree of data release work from application to administration. What about grants that are for a purpose not yet having been done in the County? What do we do with 2 years' experience required then? Why eliminate any new entities from being able to form?

There's a problem with a repayment provision on page 5, line 22. Any requirement of this type should note permission to sell over a time period desired only, and not include post sale activities of a new owner, that cannot be controlled by the seller.

Also, the financial repercussions to the County seem extreme here. We fully expected the fiscal analysis to not include the vast cost to the County of limiting the number of grantees that could possibly exist for large projects, and the onus on small ones, yet we thought there would at least be an attempt to define staff costs in setting up and enforcing the new system and rules, but no.

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Another area of harm of all these blanketed new provisions is the effect on very important social services provided by non-profits across the County, helping those in the most need, being overly scrutinized, put through time-consuming and expensive financial auditing, reporting, compiling, disclosing donors, which could have a chilling effect, with no regard to types or amounts of grants. It is so very clear that this Bill was brought on by a set of concerns over one non-profit entity/project (which have been very much argued are even legitimate) but even if they were, this is not the answer. Desiring some extra construction project info by putting all grantees at risk of expense and inappropriate disclosure requirements is irresponsible. Asking for an overreach beyond Federal rights, expecting non-profits to either violate privacy issues or not seek funds? Why starve out grassroots entities? How ironic that this Bill as written will actually benefit the most profitable and funded of entities and starve out others.

There have been some social media attacks in advance, on anyone testifying against this Bill as being against transparency and taxpayer fund scrutiny and that's ridiculous. Would it be equally ridiculous to label all who are for this Bill as charity haters, wanting to stop County non-profits from using grants to help underserved residents? Hmm, well, let's look at thoughtfully presented concerns, and make this right. Of course the easiest way to do that is to just vote no. There's too much friendly fire in this targeted Bill.

Thank you,

Lisa Markovitz

President, The People's Voice

Association of Community Services
ACS
OF HOWARD COUNTY

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Testimony in Opposition to Council Bill 58-2026

The Association of Community Services, a 501c3 nonprofit membership organization, has worked for over 60 years to improve the well-being of our community by strengthening Howard County's nonprofits. On behalf of our 100 members, we strongly oppose CB58 and urge members of the County Council not to pass it.

While we agree that transparency and accountability are important, this bill is the wrong approach to addressing those concerns. We believe CB58 will have a negative impact on our county's nonprofits, on the county agencies providing grant funding, and ultimately, on the community we all serve.

Our local nonprofits feed the hungry. House the homeless. Care for the elderly and disabled. Support those in crisis. Mentor youth. Clean the environment. Inspire us through the arts, and so much more. They provide a "soft infrastructure" to our community that can't be met through government alone and won't be met through the business sector.

Nonprofits are doing this under unprecedented challenges due to budget cuts and policy changes coming out of Washington, and outright attacks on the competence and integrity of our sector. Our recent survey found that the majority of Executive Directors expect demand for their services to continue increasing, while funding is expected to decrease. Not surprisingly, levels of Executive Director and staff burnout are higher than ever. We've seen the resignations of five Executive Directors since the beginning of this year just within the NonProfit Collaborative.

CB58 would put additional application and reporting requirements on nonprofits, which will further burden a sector already under stress and take away more time and resources from their mission-driven work.

Nonprofits that receive grant funding – whether from government or private foundations – already face burdensome requirements in application and reporting processes. Annual applications require repeated submissions of the same documentation. Different funders require different reporting metrics. Nonprofits spend a great deal of time managing grant funds that often don't even fully cover the costs associated with providing the services being funded. There is also already a required level of transparency, as the 990s nonprofits file with the IRS are publicly available. Nonprofits also file annual reports with the MD Secretary of State and the Department of Assessments and Taxation.

Nothing will be gained by requiring nonprofits to submit more documentation if funding agencies don't have the resources to meaningfully and timely evaluate the material they receive.

County agencies responsible for dispersing grant funds, already short-staffed, will see their capacity to process applications and payments in a timely manner stretched even more. We are fortunate that the Office of Community Partnerships, which manages the bulk of the county's human service grants, is staffed by professionals who are well versed in best practices of grant management and passionate about using grant funds for the greatest impact. But the Office has historically been understaffed, while the number of CSP applications and grant programs they oversee has grown significantly. They need to be given the staffing, authority, and autonomy to effectively manage grants within already established policies – not more administrative burdens.

ACS also has concerns about specific provisions in this bill.

Section 22.700 would require that a nonprofit have a minimum of two years' experience "delivering services specifically related to the grant being sought." Nonprofits have long demonstrated their ability to respond to new and evolving needs within our community, demonstrating far greater nimbleness than is possible within government agencies. This provision would prevent the launch of new services to meet emerging needs and preclude innovation in existing services.

Section 22.704 would require an audit if a nonprofit has gross income from charitable contributions of $500,000 or more. The State's threshold had been $750,000 but was raised in the FY26 General Assembly session to $1,000,000, in recognition of the increasingly significant cost of an audit.

In addition, the language in the bill is often unclear as to its meaning or intent. Two examples in Section 22.701:

- Requiring nonprofits to submit federal financial returns for other nonprofits and corporations legally connected to the nonprofit. The term "legally connected" is not defined, however. Does an MOU constitute being legally connected? Does this apply if a nonprofit has an MOU with another organization for a project unrelated to the services being funded?
- It also requires a copy of any contract with any person or entity regulated as a lobbyist. Would this be required even if the lobbying effort is unrelated to the program for which funds are requested?

This lack of clarity will only lead to confusion.

While ACS strongly urges members of the County Council to vote "no" on CB58, we would support a deeper look at the county's grants programs to identify existing strengths, weaknesses, and ways to make grant processes more effective. That effort must include input from both the agencies providing grant funds and the nonprofits receiving grants to ensure that any changes will in fact improve the process and outcomes of the grant programs – not just add further requirements without clear benefits to the system.

Community
Foundation
HOWARD COUNTY

TESTIMONY

Melissa Curtin, President & CEO, The Community Foundation of Howard County
Howard County Council Public Hearing — September 22, 2026
Council Bill 58-2026 — Position: Oppose as Introduced

Good evening, Chairperson and Council members. My name is Melissa Curtin, and I am the President and CEO of the Community Foundation of Howard County.

I'm here tonight to share that the Community Foundation opposes Council Bill 58-2026 as introduced.

Howard County's grants legislation is out of date, and it's worth the Council's time to modernize it for everyone's sake. But what concerns us now is how we got here. Where was the exploration conversation? Where was the collaboration? Nonprofits were not consulted in drafting this bill. Neither were the County agencies making grants, including the Department of Community Resources and Services (DCRS), the County's largest grantmaking arm that knows what is working, what isn't, and what the County is trying to achieve through its grant programs.

We are especially stunned by the proposed bill's timeline and the County's current capacity to implement the proposed changes. The bill gives the County just 61 days after enactment to stand up a centralized application platform and a public database listing every grant, amount, recipients, audits, and program reports – a platform that does not exist yet, built and maintained by whom? All while County departments prepare for and undergo a major leadership transition.

For many of us, the capacity of the County grantmaking teams is already a significant concern. One program likely to be impacted by this bill, and of particular concern to the community foundation and many of our community partners, is the Community Services Partnership (CSP) Program under the Office of Community Partnerships. This program has historically been understaffed. Right now, two CSP staff administer nearly $10M a year across 60 – 80 grants per cycle, running three overlapping multi-year cycles at once. These two professionals do far more than issue funding. They administer a thorough, well-structured grant program while providing the thought partnership, technical assistance, resource connections, and other support that Howard County nonprofits have come to rely on. The CSP Program is likely preparing now for the launch of the next round of CSP applications that usually open in late fall. This program, like many others, cannot absorb sweeping new requirements on a 61-day clock. Adding this much new administrative burden on top of that launch lands hardest on nonprofits already stretched thin; organizations facing burnout, staff turnover, and even closures. What they need is continuity and less administrative burden, not more.

To be clear: the Community Foundation of Howard County believes deeply in transparency and effectiveness and agrees that the County should always be a good steward of taxpayer dollars. We hold ourselves to that standard every day with our donors' contributions. But the County's own Community Services Partnership Program already requires much of the documentation this bill lists, and in some places more, so a meaningful share of this bill would layer redundant paperwork on top of what nonprofits already file, rather than closing an actual information gap.

Nonprofits are an extension of the County's service arm, supporting not just people in need but the health of our entire community, including our businesses. Unfortunately, we don't have data on nonprofits' economic impact or employment numbers in Howard County, but in Maryland, there are more nonprofit employees than manufacturing, construction, hotel, and restaurant workers combined. I suspect Howard County reflects this, too.

Funding from all sources is harder for nonprofits to access, and the issues and work itself have grown more complex. I've been in this role for nearly 16 months. In that time, it became clear how much more focus, collaboration, and funding our nonprofit sector needs to keep providing the essential, quality-of-life services every Howard County resident relies on.

I want to thank you, Council Member Jung, for raising the fact that this legislation is outdated and needs review; that part of the conversation is overdue, and we're grateful someone started it. In your own words, "Over eight years on the Council, I have built a record on transparency, oversight, accessibility, and government accountability, and have pushed to increase funding for schools and infrastructure, protect the environment, lower costs, and strengthen the safety net." Those values should guide this process.

We're asking the Council not to be short-sighted, but to think about the long game: pause this bill, bring nonprofits and grantmaking agencies to the table, and have the conversations that our nonprofits and community deserve. Explore solutions for what we can solve; whether requirements like the two-year track record or the 25 percent match make sense for every grant size or only the largest ones; and what a realistic timeline looks like once the County has the staff and systems to carry it out. Let's also use this moment to talk about growing grantmaking across agencies in the annual budget, so Howard County can meet our neighbors' essential needs, the crisis included, from a place of readiness, not scarcity. Thank you.

HCCA **Howard County Citizens Association**
Since 1961...
The Voice Of The People of Howard County

Date: 22 September 2026
Subject: HCCA Testimony for CB58-2026

Good evening.

I am Stu Kohn from Scaggsville and testifying on behalf of the Howard County Citizens Association, HCCA as its President.

We would hope all our Council members would be in favor of this Bill introduced by Council-member Deb Jung.

A quote about "Transparency" is stated as, "The single most important ingredient in the recipe for success is transparency because transparency builds trust."

There is a quote regarding "Accountability" which reads, "It is often treated like a "bad word" - something associated with punishment or being "called out." But in reality, accountability is a superpower. It is the bridge between a goal and an achievement. When you own your actions, you own your results.

These two words are what makes for good government. Thank You for trying to promote Accountability and Transparency as this Bill strives to do this.

We have some comments pertaining to the Bill which are as follows:

- We agree all nonprofit agencies should be required to have a minimum of two years of experience prior to applying for a Grant.
- Having a centralized database would promote transparency in describing pertinent information.
- Please refer to Page 3 line 6 --we recommend after this line the following be stated, "The anticipated completion date of the Project shall be provided with the Grant application."
- Refer to Page 3 line 24 – after the word "disbursed" add --if the Grant funding has not been spent by the anticipate completion date of the Project as provided by the Grantee in the application, then the remaining funding shall be returned.
- Please refer to Page 5 Lines 7 thru 9 - what is the rationale for asking "for at least 25% of the total proxy costs from private or non-private sources." We ask because some of our Board Members are concerned this percentage is high as some large expensive projects could otherwise go to deserving non-profits.

- Refer to Page 6 line 19 – after the word "funds" add -- and available to the public via the County website.

- Question – is there any opportunity for the public to comment if they have any concern about a particular Grant?

- Refer to Page7 line 2 – after the word "sources" add – the anticipated date when the Grant will be completed

There is no question the proposed details regarding the administration of the Grant program with the adoption of CB58-2026 will be most rewarding for ALL CONCERN PARTIES. It would be in the best interest to pass this Bill unanimously especially if you believe in Transparency and Accountability. We thank Council-member Jung for promoting improvements to the Grant Program.

Thank you,

Stu Kohn

Stu Kohn
HCCA President