

**Testimony of the Howard County Association of Realtors®
Regarding CB 24-2017
Delivered March 20, 2017
To the Howard County Council**

Chairman Weinstein and members of the Council,

My name is David Yungmann. I am a Realtor® with Keller Williams Integrity in Ellicott City and a Board Member of the Howard County Association of Realtors®. I'm testifying on behalf of HCAR in strong opposition to CB-24.

For years you've heard claims that conventional septic systems cause enormous harm to groundwater quality and the health of The Bay. The volume of that rhetoric has increased over the past several years and has become a primary factor in development and zoning policy. However, science simply does not back up those claims.

A 2012 study by the University of Maryland examined the costs and benefits of various water improvement methods. Septic system improvements were identified as the least cost effective tool due to a variety of factors.

The three largest sources of pollutants account for around 65% of all Bay pollution. Yet septic systems contribute less than 6% of the pollutants, 75% of which is from systems within 1,000 yards of tidal waters – the Critical Area. That leaves less than 2% attributed to the tens of thousands of private septic systems statewide outside of the Critical Area. CB-24 seeks to lower (not eliminate) the pollutants from a mere 200-300 new septic systems in Howard County.

However, the BAT system costs \$8,000-\$10,000 more than a modern conventional septic system. The annual maintenance can be \$500/year due to the need for a constant stream of electricity and annual maintenance. All to eliminate a virtually non-existent level of pollutants. And this is why the University of Maryland study ranked these BAT septic investments as the least cost effective tool to protect groundwater and The Bay.

What this CB-24 requirement does accomplish is unnecessarily increasing the cost of housing in Howard County. But because it effects a relatively small number of homeowners and developers – septic regulation and BAT system requirements are the easy target for advocates. It's easy to talk about death by 1,000 scratches if it's not your money.

This is why we count on you as policy-makers to collect the facts and recognize that requirements like this are expensive regulations with little positive impact.

In the event that CB-24 is intended as a means to restoring development rights through approval of CB-16, HCAR supports that effort but remains in strong opposition to imposing BAT requirements for any reason. Restoration of those property rights should not require offsetting bad policy or costly regulation with no return. We urge you to vote no on CB 24 and appreciate your consideration.