



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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February 9, 2017

The Honorable Jon Weinstein, Chairperson
Howard County Council
3430 Courthouse Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Re: Howard County Council Bill No. 9-2017

Dear Chairperson Weinstein:

In accordance with Section 209(g) of the Howard County Charter, I have today vetoed Howard County Council Bill No. 9-2017 ("CB9"). As a lifelong resident of Howard County, I know first-hand that we are an inclusive and diverse county. I was raised by a man who fought for civil rights and who taught me to respect everyone. And I know that employees in county government treat everyone who lives and visits the county with respect and dignity.

Throughout this process, I have said that CB 9, which the County Council amended and passed on Monday, February 6, 2017, is a bad solution to a problem that does not exist in Howard County. It is little more than a hollow political statement. It unnecessarily divided our foreign-born community and caused rifts in our county. The bill offers a false sense of security to undocumented immigrants, compromises public safety efforts and puts us at risk of losing critical federal funding for community services and law enforcement.

For these reasons, I have vetoed CB9.

It was irresponsible to hastily file this legislation. Responsible leadership calls for due diligence. Unfortunately, in this case, there was none. I agree with you when you said, when voting against this bill, that this issue deserved a thorough, inclusive and deliberative process prior to its introduction.

I appreciate you and Council member Fox for your bipartisan opposition to this bill.

If the sponsors had reached out to key stakeholders prior to filing it, they would have learned this was unnecessary legislation. They would have heard from the Police Department, other government agencies, and organizations supporting immigrants that in Howard County, we do not have a problem with this issue. They would have learned why codifying this language *creates* problems. And they would have understood why no other county in Maryland nor Baltimore City has passed a similar law.

Instead, Council members Ball and Terrasa filed this legislation without consulting and without notice to key stakeholders. They filed legislation that unfairly and inaccurately created the perception that there is a problem in Howard County with the way our Police Department and county employees interact with our foreign-born population.

Let me be clear, nothing could be further from the truth. There are no known instances – not a single one – in which a member of our community has indicated they were harassed or mistreated based on their immigration status by the Police Department or county government employees.

The mission of our Police Department -- to ensure that everyone who lives, works or visits Howard County is safe – has never changed. Their focus is on protecting our community and not on enforcing federal immigration law. In fact, they have gone above and beyond to work with people of all nationalities – creating partnerships with FIRN, HopeWorks and others so that our police officers have adequate training and understanding of different cultures and religions.

We've hired multicultural liaisons to help with outreach and to strengthen relationships. This dedication to inclusiveness runs through the fabric of county government. And we have a county government that represents our community's diversity, working every day to make sure our services are comprehensive and accessible. To imply otherwise is insulting.

Our priorities and policies are driven by shared values of inclusion, collaboration and opportunity. These are the guiding principles that led to efforts like our #OneHoward campaign and Congressman Elijah Cummings' Stand Up, Speak Up Howard. In the face of acts of hatred and bigotry, responsible leaders on the local, state and federal level have engaged the community, promoted dialogue and sought solutions that are impactful, without causing greater anxiety in the community.

At the end of the day, we know we are a stronger, more prosperous county because we welcome new people, new ideas and new opportunities.

We recognize that local government can and should continue its efforts to strengthen interactions with the foreign-born community. And so we will continue to work with FIRN, HopeWorks, Maryland Legal Aid and engage our law enforcement partners – the State's Attorney and the Sheriff – to strengthen our joint outreach and training efforts.

I know there is some uncertainty right now on the federal level that has caused concern. But there should be no uncertainty in Howard County. My administration will continue to champion and preserve our values and treat every resident with dignity and respect. My promise, as County Executive, is that Howard County will continue to be a welcoming and inclusive community where we celebrate our diversity.

Sincerely,



Allan H. Kittleman
County Executive

cc: Howard County Council
Jessica Feldmark, Council Administrator
Gary W. Kuc, County Solicitor