

June 21, 2021

**Re: OPPOSITION TO CB56 – New Forest Conservation Definitions**

Dear Counsel Chair Walsh and Members of the Howard County Council:

The Howard County Chapter of the Maryland Building Industry Association (MBIA) writes in opposition to Council Bill 56, which would create a lookback provisions for the disturbance of certain trees as well as revise the definition of specimen trees. The Forest Conservation Act of Howard County was repealed and reenacted in December 2019 with an effective date of February 5, 2020. A revised Forest Conservation Manual was approved by Resolution in February 2021. Since these Acts and Manuals were only recently passed, it is an unreasonable burden on builders and developers to now consider additional changes to the Forest Conservation Act. Both the County and the industry has only begun to implement these new rules and their isn't a track record that indicates that changes are necessary at this time.

This legislation would create a largely unenforceable legislative mandate that would change the definition of a specimen tree to be more broadly defined and retroactively apply these standards to trees that have been cleared in the last 5 years. Retroactively applying this standard would endanger multiple projects and homeowners that have complied with current standards and place projects in which considerable funds and manpower have already been attributed. Additionally, the practicality of determining which trees over the past 5 years that have been cleared met the standard outlined in the bill would be difficult, if not impossible to determine and constitute a considerable investment in time and funds, and which will ultimately lead to an inaccurate count of specimen trees since there is not a practical way to determine which trees met the standard prior to being cleared.

We do not agree that Howard County's definition of specimen trees should be different than that defined in the State Forest Conservation Act. In our opinion, the change would have unintended consequences and probably lead to development rights being further constrained. The fiscal impact of further limiting development has not properly been analyzed especially since the Variance process was only recently changed in the 2019 legislation.

For these reasons, MBIA respectfully requests the Council vote against Council Bill 56-2020. Thank you for your attention to this vital issue and your continued support of the local home building industry. If you have any questions about these comments and would like to discuss MBIA's position further, please do not hesitate to contact me at [iambruso@marylandbuilders.org](mailto:iambruso@marylandbuilders.org) or (202) 815-4445.

Best regards,

Isaac Ambruso, Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs

Cc: Counsel Chair Elizabeth Walsh  
Vice-Chair Opel Jones  
Councilmember Deb Jung  
County Executive Calvin Ball  
Councilman David Yungmann

## Sayers, Margery

---

**From:** Tori Diersen <torridtorid@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 28, 2021 8:45 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Support of CB 56 and CB 57

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

I am writing in support of CB 56 and 57 because I believe they will protect our natural environment which is CRITICAL to our futures. Saving mature and historic trees not only beautifies our neighborhoods, but it also helps with water management by slowing run-off (therefore preventing flooding). Additionally, preventing soil erosion and protecting natural habitats for insects, birds, and many other members of the wildlife community that we share our space with is of extreme importance to me and many of those that I know. I feel disappointed by the number of times I hear about a developer ignoring regulations and damaging our environment because the consequences are not enough of a deterrent when weighed against the monetary profit they will experience. It is emotionally exhausting and disappointing to know that the interests of me and my loved ones are not being protected. I absolutely favor the natural environment over concrete and steel monstrosities and nature brings me and nearly everyone I know a sense of peace, health, and relaxation. Please consider CB 56 and 57 positively and demonstrate that you care about the mental and emotional health of the residents in your county as well as the environment and our futures.

Thank you,  
Tori Diersen  
Savage, MD