

CB 11-2023

Sayers, Margery

From: charlotte hardnett <charaka1908@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 11, 2023 6:30 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Bill re. Audits

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I fully support the draft "Act amending the Howard County Code and establishing certain processes for certain audits by the Howard County Auditor's Office, and generally relating to the Howard County Auditor's Office.

charlotte hardnett
10100 Twin Rivers Rd #353, Columbia, MD 21044
443-546-3030 (h)
410-302-9710 (c)

Sayers, Margery

From: Hans and Marie Raven <hansandmarie.raven@verizon.net>
Sent: Wednesday, March 8, 2023 9:55 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: CB11-2023 & proposed firing of county auditor

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

Dear Councilmembers,

I learned of the situation with the county auditor and Howard County library system from Councilmembers Jones and Rigby in a joint email statement. I have reviewed the [auditor's report](#) and Howard County Library System's Board of Trustees [response](#) to the auditor and proceedings. I also reviewed this [opinion piece by Shiela Jennifer](#) which had a copy of the event invitation, unredacted. Finally I have reviewed proposed CB11-2023, and I would like to express my opinion about the legislation and the whole situation.

First of all, this situation has been as fascinating and awful as a train wreck in slow motion. I don't wish to make a dig against lawyers, but it seems that as soon as "on the advice of counsel" began to occur, the parties involved in this debacle stopped communicating clearly and productively in a way which would have avoided much of the misunderstanding. The situation revolves around a few key issues, which are being obscured by the heightened sensitivity of our social climate to the issue of race, and to the political involvement in libraries which have faced censoring of books and other materials.

Let me be clear, I DO believe the description in the auditor's report about attendee's racial composition and color of their attire was unnecessary and at best careless. However, rather than presuming outright racism or other social bias from anyone, I prefer to presume competence and good intentions in everyone unless proven otherwise. When mistakes are made, they should be viewed as a learning opportunity. Everyone is capable of learning. When children don't know how to swim, we teach. When children don't know how to read, we teach. When children (and adults) don't know how to behave, we ... punish? Why is "teach" not our first response to this question? When attempts to educate have not been successful, it is then time to look at the types of educational strategies being used, as well as what consequences the individual may need to face from willful wrong-doing.

I'd rather focus on the valid, teachable moments raised by the auditor's office's processes.

1. The banner ad from the library webpage about the event was unclear. Although the library calendar is purported to indicate the event was open to all, foot traffic to the library was immediately minimized by the banner indicating that the library would be closed (for normal library functions related to obtaining materials). More clarity in the banner on the landing page should be considered in the future so that it is clear that patrons may still come to the library for the special event noted on the banner. This would be doubly important given the invitation from the sponsoring organization on their website is purported to have indicated the event was "by invitation only" in the additional information section about the event.
2. The office of the auditor describes taking steps which are visualized as hiding in the bushes in some sort of stake out for the event. Yet somehow they still failed to take the steps to test the central hypothesis to their investigation, that the event was private. The simplest approach would have been to attempt to enter the event and possibly converse with the attendees. If access was refused, a much stronger case for misuse of funds could be argued, especially given the answers given by Ms. Aikens to the auditor's preliminary questions about the event on October 5th.
3. The representatives of the auditor who showed up on January 13, 2023 at the Central Branch failed to leave a copy of their order from the County Council about the audit which hopefully would have detailed in writing the reason for their visit. Instead with no written copy to refer to, branch staff were confused and believed two separate audits including one about employment verification was occurring in addition to the one "authorized by the County Council." When law

enforcement serves a subpoena or search warrant, the individuals involved are provided a written copy to review and keep.

4. The library system's board has correctly identified that a further review of their policies is needed in regards to the use of staff leave for the event.

Finally, I support the legislation calling for a clear scope to audits and standards to be met. I also think that preliminary review by the council would be helpful for minimizing the mistakes and embarrassment caused by this audit. However, I don't think what has been clarified throughout this whole train wreck has been to what extent the auditor can be involved in the library's oversight. It sounds like "on the advice of counsel" the lawyers need to get into a room and hash all of that out so that further clarity can be expressed in this or other subsequent legislation. Then each party can approach the process with clarity, transparency, and a firm concept of legal scope.

Sincerely,
Marie

Hans and Marie Raven
Laurel, MD
301-317-8010 (home)

Sayers, Margery

From: Marc M <mamarcinelli@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 6, 2023 3:18 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: CB11-2023

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

To the Council:

I heard Councilman Jones discuss the matter on WBAL Saturday morning show. I would like to hear the auditors description of the events before passing judgement on this bill.

Please refrain from a vote, and have a report published for the citizens of Howard County to review.

Regards,
Marcus Marcinelli
4537 Chews Vineyard, Ellicott City, MD 21043
443 561 7296

Sayers, Margery

From: Joshua Benson <joshbenson06@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 4:09 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Testify: Support for CB11-2023

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

Dear Howard County Council,

I am voicing my support for CB11-2023 as a District 1 resident. Our County's audits must be run on behalf of the government and, more importantly, on behalf of the residents, not to be used as a political tool or operated at the will of an individual. I support the additional transparency through notices and reports, scoping requirements, and council oversight introduced with this amendment.

Joshua Benson
5128 Ilchester Woods Way
Ellicott City, MD 21043
443-910-0882