

3/17/2025 Testimony – Inspector General Advisory Board

Good evening. My name is Kathleen Downs. My husband and I have lived in Howard County since 1992.

- I applied for a position on the IG advisory board because I believe in what IGs do and in the necessity of having them conduct independent and impartial investigations and audits.
- Even the best run governments benefit from having IGs review their operations, processes, and systems. It helps build confidence that a government is acting to protect public monies by identifying and fixing problematic practices. Not to mention identifying misuse or fraud.
- As watchdogs and guardians, IGs can and should draw attention to issues that need to be addressed to improve operations and systems and advocate for the necessary changes.
- What a successful IG does need is the full cooperation of everyone. It can be tough to accept someone “from the outside” reviewing and critiquing operations; they do not know the business or your operations. So, you teach them and you do not take it personally.

As to what I can contribute, I am honored to say that I was a career Federal civil servant for over 34 years. I started my career as an economist at Commerce. I ended it as a Director for Financial Management Policy at IRS. Between these career bookends, I gained extensive experience in financial management in its broadest definition -- accounting, financial statements, auditing, cash and credit management, debt collection – as well as experience in research, analysis, policy development, systems, writing and training. I have stood up programs and created supporting systems, as well as maintained operations. I have worked with a variety of people – other Feds, bank representatives, contractors, independent auditors, to name a few. My work was both government and agencywide. I was lucky enough to work at organizations and for people that cared about improving government and making changes.

My goal is straightforward: to contribute my knowledge and abilities toward standing up Howard County’s Office of the IG, and putting it on a sound footing for the future. Exactly what that ends up looking like is to be determined, but the place to start is with the groundwork that the staff has already done. The first trick is to make this IG position competitive as to salary and benefits so the County can attract a good, solid, if not exceptional, candidate. A lot of what happens after that will flow from there.

Thank you for this opportunity.