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STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
OPINIONS AND ADVICE DIVISION

ANTHONY G. BROWN
Attorney General

August 6, 2025

Dr. Opel Jones
Presiding Officer
Howard County Council
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043-4392

Dear Dr. Jones:

I am writing in response to your request for an official opinion of the Attorney General on whether the inclusion of Alternate Members on Howard County's Board of Appeals is permissible under the Howard County Charter or whether a Charter amendment is required to authorize the inclusion of Alternate Members on the County's Board of Appeals.

I regret to inform you that we are unable to provide you with the opinion you seek. Under the longstanding policy of the Attorney General's Office, we are able to issue official opinions at the request of local jurisdictions only when, among other things, the request raises significant questions of *State* law (rather than local law) that have potential ramifications beyond the particular local facts giving rise to the request. *See* <http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/Opinions/faq.aspx>. Here, your request asks for an interpretation of the County Charter, which is a question of Howard County law, not State law. As a matter of longstanding practice, we do not issue official opinions of the Attorney General on questions of county law, including about the interpretation of a provision of a county charter. *See, e.g., 105 Opinions of the Attorney General 94, 101 (2020); 88 Opinions of the Attorney General 145, 150 (2003); 67 Opinions of the Attorney General 264, 264 n.1 (1982).*

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Although we cannot provide you with an official opinion of the Attorney General, I hope this letter is helpful in explaining why that is the case.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Hughes", written in a cursive style.

Patrick B. Hughes
Chief Counsel, Opinions and Advice