

Good Evening Council Members,

My name is Ryan Powers from Glenwood. I have a few roles as a resident in the County so it's important to highlight that I'm testifying on CR193-2025 as an individual.

It is against the public interest for the Council to continue to keep an appointee's qualifications and financial disclosure hidden from public scrutiny. I do not know who Ms. Ramos is and so I can't testify for or against her. But as a resident, I would ask that this Council ask Ms. Ramos on her thoughts about the role the County should have in disclosures of conflict of interests and proactive Advisory opinions. I believe that until we have greater resident participation, conflicts of interest need to be clearly stated on the record for the public domain.

The Council should charge Ms. Ramos and the Ethics Commission with providing suggestions to improve the Ethics Law, including how standards regarding potential Conflicts of Interest are defined and enforced

I would like to know if this nominee is willing to take on these specific ethical questions:

Should board members, like those who serve on the Board of Appeals, be allowed to run for political office while remaining in their position? Ethics Board members cannot "Hold or be a candidate for any elected or appointed Office. Shouldn't we hold all board members to the same standards? The appearance of political influence is an ongoing concern for me. Montgomery County recognizes the right of quasi-judicial board members to run for political office while preserving the public interest. Such candidates may not: (1) solicit or accept from a person within the official's jurisdiction a financial contribution for any political candidate, political organization or ballot question (other than a ballot question which directly affects the official's agency); or (2) solicit from a person within the official's jurisdiction an endorsement of or opposition to a political candidate

Should a lobbyist registered with the county serve on a compensation review commission for the County Council? I believe that in order to reduce conflicts of interest, all appointees should have conflict of interest statements as well as resumes published in "Related Documents"

Should people serve on a government board which directly benefits an organization in which they are the director? A required Advisory opinion will help to define boundaries.

The Howard County Ethics Commission seems to have long recognized that "The Ethics law is to be construed liberally to effectuate its purpose and policy, including "promot[ion] [of] the continued trust and confidence of the citizens of Howard County in the impartiality and independent judgment of public officials and employees." See Section 22.201 (a). " (Advisory 2025-03) I want to note that employees are defined broadly by the Ethics Commission to include volunteers serving on boards. There's a lot of little things that aren't big deals by themselves but keep on adding up. We need an updated Ethics Law.

Thank you, Ryan Powers