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Speaking AGAINST CB5-2016

I recognize that tax credits are a popular means by which government tries to shape public behavior. But I'm disappointed to see this bill which would extend the property tax credits for 'high performing residential buildings.'

I find it challenging to determine how extension of the existing tax break will benefit Howard County tax payers in general.

It appears that residents affluent enough to build or retrofit their residence so that it qualifies for LEED rating have been receiving up to $5000 in tax credits for each of 4 years. This clearly benefits them as individuals, but how does it benefit me or other taxpayers? My tax dollars lower <u>their</u> tax bills while raising the value of <u>their</u> home and reducing <u>their</u> energy bills. And in return I get.........? Forgive me if I sound selfish here.

According to a Sun article from 12/27/15 the program is set to expire in 2017. It has paid out some $293,000 in credits. I could not locate a current report on the number of persons qualifying for the tax credit in a timely manner so I had to try to guestimate. Warning: There's math coming.

If one generously presumed that only 10 participants received the maximum $20,000 over 4 years (10 people x 4 yrs x $5,000 maximum annual credit =$200,000) that would leave only $93,000 for others to share. Assuming that for some reason they were only getting a little more than half the maximum over the four years or $10,000+ that yields only 9 additional participants. In other words, if I'm in the right ballpark, then less than 20 people have benefitted in total. I don't see how that low number can be touted as .....restoring and preserving our environment today.

Questions come to mind:

1.) Is the low number of participants over four years indicative of the effectiveness of the credit in encouraging change?

2.) What would the direct energy impact of the 19 participating buildings be on Hoard residents? And how does it relate to the immediate impact on the environment?

3.) Why is the county working to reduce energy consumption in private homes when energy is not a county regulated or limited commodity? If we were trying to reduce sewer or water usage, or trash generation thru tax credits there would be a direct taxpayer benefit involved because of the county's role in providing those infrastructure components.

If the participating homeowners have already received $10,000 to $20,000 in tax credits—plus the low, low utility bills the LEED features should be producing—haven't they received enough benefit??? LEED improvements are high end/high cost products. They are not an option for lower income/ fixed income residents, such as those residing in our older neighborhoods in need of renovation. Is it appropriate to take their tax dollars to subsidize affluent residents? Is this really the best use of taxpayer dollars???

Perhaps we could move this funding to help low or moderate residents winterize their homes.

Perhaps we could offer credits to developers who leave large stands of mature trees to shade their houses.

Or perhaps we could create a fund to protect unsuspecting homeowners who have jumped on the no-money-down solar installation bandwagon without realizing their contract may have placed a lien on their home.

Thank you for giving this further consideration.