



**Oakland Mills Community Association**  
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February 16, 2016

Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman  
Howard County Councilmembers  
3430 Courthouse Drive  
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Dear Mr. Kittleman and Councilmembers,

Re: CB12-2016

The Oakland Mills Village Board applauds your effort to change the structure of certain county departments to enhance their ability to meet the needs of county residents and businesses. However, we ask that the bill be amended to strike out all sections dealing with the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Housing Commission and the Housing and Community Development Board.

The Kittleman Transition Team Report section on the Department of Housing and Community Development lists six recommendations. The first recommendation is “develop a comprehensive county-wide vision and plan for all housing in Howard County and appoint an existing or new entity, or an experienced credentialed housing professional, to assume overall leadership for the implementation of the plan.” We feel this plan needs to be in place before any reorganization of the housing entities takes place. The reorganization is the sixth and final recommendation and therefore should follow development of this plan.

There is a strong need to create more equitable housing policy in Howard County. The redevelopment of Columbia’s older village centers must deal with the surrounding housing to re-establish Rouse’s vision of housing for residents from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The equitable distribution of financially assisted (subsidized, affordable, MIHUs, etc.) housing throughout the county is critical. Creation of the plan must include resident and business participation with requirements for advance notice, public hearings and an appeal process concerning location of any publically or privately provided financially assisted housing. This must be done before the Housing Commission is granted greater latitude in its mission.

The Oakland Mills Village Board appreciates the County Executive’s and County Council’s efforts to deal with the housing issues in our county.

Sincerely,

***Virginia M. Thomas, Co-Chair***  
Oakland Mills Village Board

***William R. McCormack, Co-Chair***  
Oakland Mills Village Board

## TESTIMONY – CB12 - 2016

Good evening. I am John DiTomasso. I have lived at 9448 Farewell Road in Columbia for almost 45 years.

I'm testifying tonight on behalf of OMIA – the Oakland Mills Improvement Association. Our organization came together around the issue of the purchase by the Housing Commission of the Verona apartments in November of 2013.

This contentious issue galvanized our community and its Village Board to fight for the revitalization of our village. Oakland Mills has been in a downward spiral for a good number of years. The problems of the village have been acerbated by the County's housing policies that failed to prevent a concentration of low-income housing. It is my belief that a Housing Commission with a director that does not have a line relationship with the County Executive will not be responsive to County residents. The current structure has prevented the director from ignoring the OM community. It has enabled the community to use the safeguards that are a part of our county government's standard operational procedures. If you further separate the Housing Commission from the County government by allowing it to hire its own director, with no line relationship to the County Council or County Executive, I believe you will be making a grave error. Yes, when an unpopular decision is made, people will blame the Commission and its director. But that is not good governing and it is not what the residents of Howard County expect from its elected officials.

A countywide policy that describes what is expected in our county in terms of affordable housing is an absolute necessity in order for us to have an organized approach to this problem. I believe that before any thoughts about restructuring the Commission are entertained, a comprehensive housing policy should be developed.

Apparently the transition teams for both Ken Ulman and for Allan Kittleman both recommended as their first priority that the County develop a comprehensive housing plan. In fact, one of the goals of OMIA is to "encourage the development of a countywide **Comprehensive Housing Policy** that works toward affordable housing that is deconcentrated and distributed equitably throughout the county". I urge you to consider the development of a comprehensive housing policy, a high priority item in the coming months.

Finally, I respectfully request you to remove the section of CB 12-2016 that would make the Housing Commission more independent from the County by authorizing the Commission to hire its own director.