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County Council - Howard County, Maryland
George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

RE: CB12-2016 *Filed electronically*

Dear Honorable Council Members,

I am contacting you about CB12-2016 which you are currently reviewing. I have several concerns as well as points about the bill to share with you. As you probably know, I serve on the Howard County Commission on Aging - I am writing you myself, *not* as a member nor on behalf of the Commission.

The change in name to add "independence" may be good if it means the goal is keeping seniors independent. If linking aging and disabled citizens together, that is not good - aging is not a disability.

I think the Commission should be indeed "broadly representative" of the senior population of Howard County such as racially, ethnically, sex. Unfortunately, the Commission in the last several years has become very, very white and very female. It is not representative of the senior nor general population. There is a large Asian population in Howard, yet there is only one representative who leaves the Commission shortly. There are no blacks. There are no Hispanics/Latinos. There are no longer any Indian or Pakistani. It may be advantageous to ask the current Commission members if they could suggest citizens who would broaden the scope of representation - many have wide contacts in the County that could easily broaden and vary the members. Consideration should be given to having non-voting members for one-year terms such as college/master students interested in the study area.

The lowering of the age requirement from 55 to 50 is **not** a good idea. Already, there is provision for those under 55 to serve, though they cannot be the majority. The lifestyle and phase of those younger than 55 is very different from those over 55. Those that are 50 and less simply do not have the same life issues as older adults do. The age of retirement is getting later and later, lowering the age would make it possible for the Commission

to have a majority that do not represent the issues of seniors. Though the County is rebranding its senior centers to “50+ Centers”, it would be very difficult to undo the age requirement should it be changed.

The Commission should be more involved in oversight of County programs. And not only in the Office on Aging, but others areas that impact seniors as well such as transportation and housing.

The language indicating the Commission on Aging [and Independence] does surveys should be dropped. This has not happened in over 15 years, and it is the Office on Aging that should do these as well as studies, plans which it does. This language is a “hold over” from when the original commission acted as the Office on Aging before that office was created.

The changing of the Commission’s role Changing the Commission’s role from “shall review the proposed budget” to “may make recommendations”... [Section 12.501, (e) (3) pg. 18, Line 13-18 ***diminishes the role of the Commission***. “Shall” should stay; in fact, the Commission should be more intimately involved in policy and budget review. Changing this is not a good thing. The Commission plans to begin working with the Office on Aging [and Independence] starting early this summer to give input into budget and policies of the Office.

Throughout official County language, in this Bill as well as through County codes, policies, seniors are referred to as “aged” or “elderly,” not as older county residents or the older population or the senior population. The terms “aged” and “elderly” do not seem to refer to the entire class that the Office on Aging and Commission on Aging serve. As a previously mentioned, retirement age is increasing, not decreasing, and many people are much more active... at later ages.

I think the terms “aged” and “elderly” should be replaced with more contemporary and socially appropriate language, preferring to use the term “older”... which means I’m getting older - rather than old, elderly, aged which strike me as having pejorative connotations. “Aging” or “older” are fine. The Federal and our County codes refer to “older” adult American/Countians, not old, aged, elderly.

“I am getting older but I am not old yet”...Norman Lear, age 93.

Sincerely,

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