

Smarter Growth Alliance for Howard County

January 21, 2020

The Honorable Howard County Council
George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

RE: CB1-2020, School Capacity Testing – Support

Dear Council Members:

The Smarter Growth Alliance for Howard County is an alliance of local and state organizations working together to foster healthy, equitable and sustainable communities through smarter development and transportation decisions and improved protections for the county's natural, historic and cultural resources.

We support CB1-2020 to increase from four years to seven years the time period that a project must be retested if it fails one or more components of the school capacity test of the Adequate Public Facilities Act of Howard County.

Many Maryland jurisdictions face the same growth management issues as Howard County and employ Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances to control the pace of growth so schools and other infrastructure are not overburdened. The ordinances in both Carroll and Anne Arundel counties allow projects that fail school capacity tests to proceed only after six years. In Calvert County, such projects are allowed to proceed after seven years. These six- and seven-year periods give the local government the necessary time to assess capacity issues system-wide and address the issues with redistricting, a capital project like a school addition or construction of a new school, or a combination thereof. It is important to consider that in cases where a new school is needed, obtaining project funding, selecting and acquiring a site, and planning for construction is often a multi-year process.

Additionally, in Howard County the maximum waiting period is actually sometimes less than four years. The school capacity test is first conducted when allocations are issued and annually thereafter when the new capacity charts are released. If a project is tested twice in the first year – first with the allocation and second when the new capacity charts are released – the wait could be closer to three years than four years. This should be kept in mind as the Council considers CB1-2020.

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We ask that you vote in favor of CB1-2020 to provide the necessary time to better align school capacity with residential development and avoid unnecessary crowding that diminishes the educational experience for our youth. Thank you for your kind consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

HARP

Lisa Soto

Chair

Safe Skies Maryland

Mark Southerland, Ph.D.

Legislative Director

Howard County Citizens Association

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Savage Community Association

Susan Garber

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The People's Voice, LLC

Lisa M. Markovitz

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Kimberly Golden Brandt

Director of Smart Growth Maryland

Transition Howard County

Margo Duesterhaus

President

cc: The Honorable Calvin Ball, County Executive