



## MID-COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

Isiah Leggett  
County Executive

Ana L. van Balen  
Director

January 20, 2012

Council President Berliner  
The Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Council President Berliner:

At its January 18, 2012 meeting the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB) discussed Bill 30-11 and approved a letter drafted by the MCCAB's Quality of Life Committee. I am submitting this letter to you on behalf of the MCCAB.

Bill 30-11, *Fire and Emergency Services Commission -Duties*, was introduced to the County Council on September 27, 2011. Bill 30-11 would repeal the authority of the Fire and Emergency Services Commission (the FESC) to approve or disapprove certain Fire and Rescue Service policies and regulations. This Bill does not affect the Commission's role to advise the Fire Chief, County Executive, and Council.

Therefore at this time the MCCAB does not support passage of Bill 30-11, however we do support the role of the Committee Evaluation and Review Board (CERB) in evaluating the FESC in 2012. The MCCAB provides the following recommendations to the County Executive and the County Council for their consideration in deliberating Bill 30-11:

### **Strengthen Public Input and Oversight**

The MCFRS consists of a public-private partnership between the MCG and the nineteen local fire rescue departments (LFRDs), which are private non-profit corporations. Consequently, the FESC and its appointed commissioners play an important role in ensuring an equitable decision making process. The MCCAB views public participation in the decision making process of the County's Executive Branch, including the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS), as an important component of ensuring a transparent, accountable and responsive Montgomery County Government (MCG). As such the FESC serves a valuable role in ensuring public input and oversight in the policy decisions of the MCFRS.

### **Evaluate and Review the Role of the FESC**

The Montgomery County Organizational Reform Commission (ORC) issued its final report on January 31, 2011 which included several recommendations for structural and organizational changes to MCG boards, committees, and commissions. The ORC's final report did not include recommendations for changes to the FESC, however the ORC did recommend accelerating "the timeline for the citizen review process that periodically evaluates the County's boards, committees and commissions." Accordingly the MCCAB recommends that the role of the FESC be evaluated in 2012 by the Committee Evaluation and Review Board.

The MCCAB appreciates the opportunity to provide advice to the County Executive and Council regarding Bill 30-11. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Gamunu "Gam" Wijetunge, MCCAB Chair