

## **Benjamin Wu / MCEDC submission**

### **Public Hearing for ZTA-21-09**

Today, we have the opportunity to seize national leadership in life sciences, continuing the positive trajectory of this key industry for Montgomery County. Councilmember Friedson's Zoning Text Amendment 21-09 for creating a Biohealth Priority Campus would be a boon to our county by streamlining the regulatory process to attract and grow biohealth facilities in Montgomery County.

We fully support this amendment, which would expand speed-to-market opportunities for multiple STEM uses, including R&D and medical and scientific manufacturing and production. A speedier, more efficient, more predictable process will invariably attract national and international companies looking to grow. It's critical in a global marketplace to be hyper competitive – and creating and promoting the Biohealth Priority Campus will heighten life science expansion in our community.

Passage of ZTA-21-09 will be a win for the county in multiple ways. One, it will attract the full spectrum of life sciences from research and development through manufacturing and distribution. Two, the companies at stake will make very large capital investments with custom built facilities that expand the tax base, providing high-paying jobs and drawing top talent. These gains will contribute mightily to the local economy.

The need for the ZTA is reinforced in a landmark report recently released by MCEDC's Economic Advisory Panel that calls for streamlining the approval process for life sciences. The ZTA passage will underpin other initiatives that include creating more lab infrastructure to meet critical demand and creating a global pandemic prevention and biodefense center in the county to address future health crises. All of this will help us reach our collective goal of rising to be a Top 3 national life science cluster. Montgomery County is poised to achieve that goal.

As Councilmember Friedson said, we must double down on our efforts to attract and retain companies doing cutting edge work. Passage of this amendment and outreach efforts signals our readiness for innovation. The time to act on ZTA 21-09 is now.