

Please Oppose Bill 18-23 and Fund the Office of the People's Counsel

Dear Councilmembers:

I am writing to urge you to oppose Bill 18-23, Structure of County Government – Community Zoning and Land Use Resource Office and to do the right thing and restore and fund the Office of the People's Counsel (OPC)—an agency that is authorized by the County Code to represent the public interest in the County's land use regulatory process, and that was designed to protect the public interest in land use hearings by promoting full and fair representation of relevant issues to achieve balanced administrative records, as well as providing technical assistance to residents so that they can effectively participate in the County's land use process. As a Montgomery County Resident who cares about and teaches about democracy, I am alarmed by the signs around me that our elected officials are removing core democratic principles such as transparency and true participation in decision-making by the people whose interests they were voted into office to represent. By denying your constituents access to this valuable resource, you are not only actively working against a transparent and democratic process, but you are actively discriminating upon those constituents with the least ability to research and understand how to navigate the complex land use process on their own. Other Maryland jurisdictions have established Offices of the People's Counsel (including Prince George's County, Baltimore County, and Harford County). If you truly claim to represent the interests of your constituents, there should be no reason to not restore and fund an Office of the People's Counsel in Montgomery County.

Sincerely,

Anna Olsson
Silver Spring