

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Jane Lyons-Raeder and I'm a renter in downtown Silver Spring. I am writing in support of Bill 18-23, Structure of County Government - Community Zoning and Land Use Resource Office. I support this legislation which would replace provisions for an Office of the People's Counsel with provisions for a Community Zoning and Land Use Resource Office. This is a more equitable alternative to the Office of the People's Counsel.

The Office of the People's Counsel was unfunded in 2010 after a report found that the office had many issues. Effectively, Offices of the People's Counsel can quickly turn into a free lawyer for neighbors who oppose development in their neighborhood. The newly proposed Community Zoning and Land Use Resource Office would make several critical changes, including removing the requirement that the Officer be an attorney and prohibit the Officer from serving as an advocate or participating in administrative proceedings. This is a more equitable version of the office that allows for an independent source of information about the development process, but that doesn't allow for free legal representation. However, I'll add that I think the staff at Montgomery Planning do a great job and have always been a ready source of information about development projects and master plans.

In closing, I urge you to support a Community Zoning and Land Use Resource Office over an Office of the People's Counsel. Should the Community Zoning and Land Use Resource Office move forward, I urge you to review the usefulness and impact of the office within its first five years to ensure it does not repeat the same issues as the past.

Thank you.