



## **AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD**

October 10, 2022

The Honorable Gabe Albornoz, President  
The Honorable Tom Hucker, Chair, T&E Committee  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Bill 24-22, ZTA 22-10, SRA 22-01, Streets and Roads

Dear Council President Albornoz and Chair Hucker,

The Montgomery County Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board – APAB is providing its comments on the above listed legislation.

The agricultural community continues to see the deemphasis of farming in the County. Contained within these pieces of legislation are recommendations to reduce the farmers voice at the table of government. On page 10 of the T&E committee pack for these legislative actions, there is a proposal to remove the 50% income requirement of owner-operators of commercial farmland to come from farming. Once again, the concern of farmers is ignored from the Rustic Road Advisory Committee. The agricultural community is tightly knit, and the farmers know who has applied for committee positions. Bona-fide farmers applied for positions on the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee and were not selected.

The farmers who applied for the committee met the income requirements and have served on other County committees. They have a unique perspective on farming in Montgomery County and how their operations are effected by rustic roads.

Another troubling proposal is the addition of two at-large members to the committee. When the program began, 60% of the members were farmer, with this proposal only 33% of the members would be farmers. It does not appear to be a committee concerned with the voice of the farmers.

The Rustic Roads Advisory Committee must represent the concerns of the agricultural community, most of the rustic roads are in the Agricultural Reserve. If this committee wants buy in from the farmers, don't waive the income requirement. If the income requirement is waived, the farmers will feel once again this program is not designed to help but to hinder their industry. The farming community feels these amendments would allow the Rustic Roads Committee to circumvent the current selection process, creating an opportunity to cherry pick individuals whom the committee deems qualified for the position based sharing their ideals and viewpoints.

The APAB asks the T&E committee to maintain the income requirement for farmer members of the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee and keep the committee membership at 7.

Sincerely,

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Office of Agricultural Services

18410 Muncaster Road · Derwood, Maryland 20855 · 301/590-2823, FAX 301/590-2839



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*Michael B. Jamison*

Michael Jamison, Chairman

cc: Marc Elrich, County Executive  
Jeremy Criss, Director, Office of Agriculture