

Montgomery County Farm Bureau

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November 26, 2021

The Honorable Tom Hucker, President
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Bill 40-21, Individual Water Supply and Sewage Disposal Systems – Amendments

Dear Council President Hucker,

Montgomery County Farm Bureau is opposed to Bill 40-21. We request that you consider our strong objections and vote against this measure as we feel it violates property rights of farmers.

A Water Quality Protection Charge (WQPC) is already being assessed to all property owners in Montgomery County. I believe those funds were intended to be used to protect water by making improvements to storm water drainage systems. So, all property owners are paying for that project.

The amendments in Bill 40-21 places the proposed costs squarely on the shoulders of those individuals with private wells and septic systems. Farmers have done far more than their fair share to protect water by planting cover crops, trees, and participating in a large variety of good soil and water quality systems, largely engineered by Montgomery Soil Conservation District's employees.

I am currently paying 624% more in water quality fees to Montgomery County than my counterparts in Frederick County (\$624 vs. \$1/ year). We do not need the heavy hand of government to collect more monies for water quality, dictate when and how to manage private septic systems, and impose permit fees, fines, and penalties on property owners when government dictates aren't or can't be followed.

If septic tanks should be pumped out every 3-5 years as language in Bill 40-21 suggests, we recommend Montgomery County use existing monies from WQPC to pay for the pumping and cover 100% of the cost. We are not persuaded that properly functioning septic tanks need to be pumped at all. My septic tank has not been pumped in over 30 years and works fine.

We are opposed to Bill 40-21 and any additional tax on Farm Bureau members. We believe further study of this matter is needed, and a different approach taken to meet water quality goals. We think a voluntary approach would be best for all. Carrots are favored over sticks.

Given that soils in Montgomery County are largely clay soils, not sandy soils, we are not in a "critical area" adjacent to the Chesapeake Bay, and we believe any effluent from individual septic systems will be properly filtered before reaching the underground aquifers and contaminate shellfish in the Bay.

In summary, we are very concerned about property rights, the negative economic impact, creation of larger government, and regulatory mandates. We recommend a voluntary approach be taken.

Sincerely,

Lonnie Luther, President

Montgomery County Farm Bureau

Cc: County Council and Staff

Marc Elrich, County Executive

Adrianna Hochberg, Acting Director, Department of Environmental Protection

Jeremy Criss, Director of Agriculture

Robert Butz, Chairman, Montgomery Soil Conservation District

Bob Cissel, Director, Montgomery Agricultural Producers

MCFB Board of Directors