

## **Opposition to Zoning Text Amendment 23-09**

Testimony of Cathy Wiss  
Montgomery County Council Hearing  
January 16, 2024

I stand with the agricultural groups, community associations, and other stakeholders who have stated clearly and firmly their opposition to ZTA 23-09.

Although I am not a farmer and do not live in Montgomery County's renowned Agricultural Reserve, I am able to be a Reserve "tourist" from my home in Washington, DC. When I need a break, I often drive down the Reserve's quiet, refreshing byways and stop off at a farm stand to buy some peaches, apples, and vegetables. The farms' produce is so good that I will drive 30 miles or more, passing several grocery stores on the way.

There is no need to allow hotels to be built in the Agricultural Reserve when people like me can easily tour it from their own homes or hotels in nearby towns. I'm grateful, too, that farmers regularly hold events that celebrate the Reserve, allowing others to appreciate it, but not intrude on farming. Again, it is easy to participate in the events without having to stay in the Reserve.

Hotels or similar places to stay would compete for farmland in the only area of the county set aside for farming. Any zoning changes must be very carefully considered with stakeholder input from the beginning. The number one issue for farmers is access to land - the cost of land is a hinderance to recruiting the next generation of farmers. We should do all we can to maintain agricultural land for farming and not reduce it by allowing other uses.

I urge you to withdraw this ZTA.