

Testimony of Cheryl Gannon

July 16, 2024

on

Resolution to amend County Charter to Limit County Executive to Two Terms

Good afternoon, my name is Cheryl Gannon and I live in Silver Spring, Maryland. Twelve years ago, when the term limit rules were proposed and put on the ballot, I worked with a group of people that attempted to build grassroots opposition to the proposal. I generally oppose term limits. I think they are anti-democratic. But in the years since that initiative was adopted, people have either been happy with it or decided they can live with the existing system.

Now, however, voters are being asked to once again change the rules and amend the charter to reduce the terms, but **only** for the County Executive office. Why? Because one person who lost an election for County Executive wants to run again, and he and some members of the business community have said publicly that this is aimed at removing Marc Elrich from office. This is a private grudge, aimed at a single person, under cover of a rule change, and should be strongly opposed by this Council. It would be a harmful precedent to establish.

It is a sign of the times, that has trickled down to the county level, that for some people when you lose an election, the next move is to complain that the system is rigged and demand new rules that benefit you or your candidate.

Here are the potential repercussions--

The proposal seeks to thwart the will of the people: The current County Executive prevailed in a multi-candidate race, despite having about 20 million dollars from the business community spent on opposing him. Now some would seek to undermine this will of the voters and take away one of the three terms that voters decided 12 years ago that the County Executive should be eligible for. They have said they want to remove from office the person chosen by voters. This is anti-democratic, targets one individual to thwart the will of the voters and that is reason enough to oppose this.

Passage will require more changes to term limit laws: There is no logical reason to have different term limit rules for the County Executive as compared to the Council. Equity will dictate that if this passes, we will need yet another rule change to terms for Council members.

Passage opens the doors to unintended consequences: Ask yourself what happens if the promoters of this broadside attack on this Executive prevail on a change in law but

continue to lose elections anyway? I feel sure we will see ballot initiatives establishing recall procedures for elected officials. Jurisdictions across the country, including our neighbors in DC, have recall procedures to remove elected officials before the term has been completed. Why even wait for a term to be finished if you can call for special elections and remove someone the voters have selected?

This is quite simply a targeted effort, financed by corporate interests, to remove one official whose popular support has been broad and deep enough to outweigh the advantages of their huge financial expenditures against him in the last election. They want a second bite at the apple.

I urge the Council to oppose this and stand on the side of the will of the voters.

Thank you.