



Submitted testimony on MC/PG 104-23 and MC/PG 105-23

December 15, 2022


Dear members of the Montgomery County Delegation:

My name is Dan Reed and I serve as the Regional Policy Director for [Greater Greater Washington](https://www.ggwash.org), a nonprofit that works to advance racial, economic, and environmental justice in land use, transportation, and housing throughout Greater Washington. GGWash strongly opposes bills MC/PG 104-23 and MC/PG 105-23.

For almost a century, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission has served both Montgomery and Prince George's counties as a forum for regional cooperation and sustainable, coordinated planning. Under the commission, the Montgomery County Planning Department and Planning Board have produced award-winning work guiding development, welcoming new residents and businesses to our county, and stewarding our environment. It is a nationally recognized organization that is in large part responsible for the high quality of life we enjoy here.

That's possible because Park and Planning is largely insulated from the political whims of elected officials. The eleven people on the County Council appoint the board and the chair, and in turn, the board provides advice to the council, which cannot pass any land-use legislation without a majority vote—in other words, a consensus that reflects the electorate's wants and needs. As the council turns over incrementally, this approach also provides the stability that the board, the professional staff, and county residents need to ensure that we follow through on the plans we make.

These two bills would erode that stability, by giving much of the County Council's authority over the Planning Board, including the ability to select members, appoint the chair, or remove members, to the County Executive. They would also remove Montgomery County from the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, a costly and disruptive reorganization of the entire agency. Doing so would destabilize planning functions in Prince George's County, while removing an important forum for collaboration as one of the biggest projects in both counties' history, the Purple Line, is under construction.

The Washington, DC region is great  and it can be greater.



Land use is a powerful tool—it's not just about what thing goes where, but who gets to fully participate in a community. Name any progressive issue , from abortion rights to racial equity, and in one way or another it's related to land use. The Planning Board, which manages land use, is far too important to hand over to a single person. It is difficult to ignore the timing of these two bills, less than two months after the County Executive unsuccessfully tried to prevent the County Council from approving Thrive, an update to Montgomery County's general plan for the next 30 years.

We urge the Montgomery County delegation to reject these two bills, which would irreparably harm one of the county's most important institutions for over a century, and disrupt the ongoing planning work that has made this such a great place to live.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Reed". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "R".

Dan Reed
Regional Policy Director
Greater Greater Washington