

Howard County PTA/PTSA Members – Action Required

The mission of PTA is to advocate for all children. The PTACHC serves a unique role to advocate specifically at the countywide level on policies that impact education. Over the last several years, members have spent significant time and effort to advocate for better adequate public facilities (APFO) regulations in order to provide enough school capacity and prevent overcrowding as enrollment increases. The modest improvements implemented are under constant legislative challenge by competing financial interests, which require continuous vigilance by our membership to prevent gradual erosion of effectiveness. The interest in this topic is not casual to the education community; as there are direct correlations in land use policies to overcrowding, redistricting frequency, safety, funding distribution, and economic disparities.

The PTACHC delegation has voted unanimously in the past to support measures to prevent school utilization levels from exceeding 100%, appropriately assessing growth mitigation, preventing class size increases, and avoiding creation of concentrations of poverty.

This year, Howard County has reviewed changes to several regulations in this vein and has initiated its General Plan Update and Housing Opportunities Task Force, which will create policy to be implemented in the General Plan update. These have continued through the period of Covid-19 social distance restrictions with little adjustment to timetables, which may reduce PTA member participation. The Housing Opportunities Task Force is formulating housing policy on all new development in the county, not just affordable housing. The Board of Education (BOE) and PTACHC are fortunate to have a representative seat in this function; however, they are the minority representing education interests relative to the larger membership of housing practitioners that have a direct interest in the outcome.

The PTA does not have a standing position on the availability of market rate or affordable housing options directly, but has a clear position that any proposed changes should not negatively affect education funding, timely provision of adequate resources at all grade levels, or exasperate economic disparities.

Sustainable, offsetting provisions and policies to provide housing opportunities are currently not as popular among practitioners that compose the majority of this effort as incentivizing increased growth rates in tandem with removing educational protections or lowering educational standards. APFO educational protections are frequently cited as a barrier to housing objectives in the materials and sessions.

Please take the time to attend the available public sessions for the General Plan and Housing Opportunities task force to show your support of a strong education system concurrent with all proposed growth plans. Please take the time to fill out the available surveys and include your support for education in the unprompted discretionary input sections provided. Please communicate to your membership the status of these changes that will directly affect all school age children in the county in some form. Regardless of the amount of educational representation in each effort, the response, participation and completion of surveys will be used to imply community consensus on these critical policy documents that will be put into legislation shortly after the project concludes.

There are a vast number of ways PTA organizations can support and advocate for children during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond. The PTA is the largest organization dedicated to this mission operated solely by volunteers. This is just one of many critical items that require your involvement for the best outcome. Please take time to use the organization's wide reaching voice to provide compelling input and solutions to this effort, as well as, the fine work you do to support education in hundreds of other ways.

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Howard County Government Links Information

HOUSING TASK FORCE SITE - <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/HousingTaskForce>

HOUSING SURVEY - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MD69JH8>

AUG 26 6PM PUBLIC MEETING - https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYrdOGqrTMiGNc0cZ-RAgLWE_GdlhJdEmDQ

SEP 10 4PM PUBLIC MEETING - <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYsdOGvqTMtGdGUA-eE8cgmZ1CwbeCH3Gco>

Howard County Government DPZ General Plan Update

NOTE – General Plan Information from the county requires an Email account, Unique password creation, and personal information.

Government Website (HOCO by DESIGN) - <https://www.hocobydesign.com/>

Survey – Requires HOCO by Design account.

Public Engagement – 14 Stakeholder initiatives planned and listed on HOCO by Design Guidelines page. No dates set as of August 26, 2020 – PTA membership should monitor closely.