

My name is Steve McKay, 3810 Shakespeare Way, Monrovia and I am here in support of Bill No. 15-11 to enact a stronger local ethics ordinance for Frederick County. I applaud County Executive Jan Gardner's drive to strengthen our ethics laws. She campaigned on it and she is putting her words in action. I applaud the work of the Ethics Task Force and the efforts of our citizens to wrestle with the enormity of the challenge before them, and the fine job that they did in coming back with a series of effective recommendations. Lastly, I applaud Council President Otis for bringing this measure forward for your consideration.

There's a reason that we've been speaking about ethics a lot over the last few years. The reason is that many of us around the county didn't think our leaders were acting ethically. Moreover, it seemed that the Ethics Commission was either absent, ineffective or indifferent to the issues. So it is with great satisfaction that I see these changes coming forward. By all means, let's have a larger, stronger Ethics Commission. Let's give them the tools to do their job and then let's put some teeth back into the Ordinance. Why did anyone in the last BoCC think it was a good idea to remove criminal penalties for ethics violations? The only reason that I can think of is that they wanted to ensure they didn't face those same criminal penalties for their own acts. So let's set a good example for the State of Maryland. Let's set the ethics bar higher and enact this bill.

Lastly, I'd like to say a few words about what has been one of the more controversial elements of this bill. Honestly, I just shake my head when I hear the arguments in favor of allowing our elected officials to contract with the County. This is such a simple, obvious concept for me that I just don't understand the opposition. Of course, it is a conflict of interest to combine elected office with county contracts. This is ethics 101 people. I've been involved in government contracting for my entire professional life. I've been directly party to organizational conflict of interest mitigation planning and I know contracting. This is a no brainer. You must remove the opportunity for elected officials to contract back to the government they are elected to govern. You should strive for public service, not self-service at the expense of the public.

Thank you.