

PUBLIC COMMENT
CHARTER GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL
regarding the
CITIZENS RESPONSE OFFICE

First allow me to thank each and every one of the volunteer Charter Board members for all of your hard work and due diligence in making this proposal thorough and comprehensive.

As a resident and the former Charles County Government Citizen Response Manager, I am a diehard advocate for the residents of Charles County. I want to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met. Based on this experience, I believe it is essential for the Citizens Response Office to be placed directly under the Office of the Inspector General in the Charter Government proposal. This recommendation is grounded in the belief

that this office should prioritize the **residents** by advocating on their behalf, assisting, and remembering that they ARE the reason for the Charles County Government.

Placing the Citizens Response Office solely under the purview of elected officials would ensure an unobstructed focus on our residents. However, to enhance transparency, moving this office under the OIG would alleviate any hint of impropriety and deconstruct the interference of the non-elected leadership who often create conflicts of interest. Under the current form of government, all government employees fall under the County Administrator, *even those employees who work directly for the Commissioners*, which puts them in the line of fire when elected and nonelected leadership disagrees. When employees advocate on behalf of the

residents, this interference just adds undue anxiety to those just trying to do their job. It cannot be said loud enough, **the government's top priority should be to help and/or support our residents.** I strongly recommend that this **no-cost** change is implemented under the Charter form of government so that this office's sole responsibility remains focused on our resident.

Under my nine-year tutelage, the Citizens Response Office saw an enormous rise of yearly concerns to the tune of 735%. Unfortunately, since I retired in October 2023, the Citizens Response Office's reporting was eliminated from the 2023 Annual Report. This is the first time in over a decade that these statistics were left out. This is a tragedy and shocking public declaration that our current leadership doesn't value our residents and their concerns. It makes a mockery of our residents.

I'm compelled to explain why the Citizens Response Office is so important for the residents, leadership, and government's priorities. By tracking the resident's concerns, without interference from leadership, it creates an untainted source of information as to what concerns are plaguing our residents. Using the statistical data of residents' concerns only benefits the elected leaders' priorities by highlighting policies that alleviate our population's greatest concerns. Furthermore, having this type of active engagement with our residents is a measurable sign that the leadership cares. What matters to the residents, matters to their elected leadership. **It confirms that they are being heard and their concerns are important.**

Moreover, it is crucial that this office operates independently and without interference from leadership in order to best serve the residents by putting them first! Based upon my support for our residents, I am a huge advocate for the upgrade to the Charter form of government. **Let the residents have their voices heard!**