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May 7, 2020

To the Charles County Board of County Commissioners:

My name is Chris Hill and I serve as President for the Southern Maryland Association of Realtors for 2020. We advocate not only for the 1,800 professional members of our organization but we give a voice to over 160,000 Southern Maryland property owners. I would like to first thank you for your adaptation to the times we find ourselves in. It only underlines the need for rural broadband programs which you have taken a lead on for the community. It has been encouraging to see the efforts to curb spending in this year's budget particularly in light of our current economic uncertainty and for that, we are grateful.

Given the global pandemic situation with increasing unemployment numbers each week, need for community support to get shelter and food to our neighbors, and statewide calls for canceling rent and mortgage forbearance, now is **not** the time to raise taxes on property owners in Charles County. Property owners foot much of the county budget, from education funding to parks to county employee salaries. No other revenue can touch the real estate portion of revenues. Your Charles County property owners include teachers, volunteer emergency workers, Realtors, law enforcement and hospital workers- we all work and live here, raise our families here. Together.

This proposed tax increase doesn't just hurt the property owner. For those owners with tenants, these additional costs only get passed off to the tenants making housing more **unaffordable** for all, from the number of new fees being added under the planning department to the property rate tax. The constant yield tax rate is the set rate for Charles County-\$1.115. Any rate higher than this amount is considered a **tax increase** including maintaining the current rate of \$1.14. While a glance at the three-cent difference may seem small, the revenue tells the different story- it is an increase of over \$4.26 million dollars. The property owners of Charles County have reason to use their portion of \$4.26 million for other pressing financial situations in our uncertain world.

We understand you are balancing the needs of citizens but request you please continue to think of the property owners and future homeowners who are also struggling to continue to pay their mortgages while maintaining some sense of stability in today's challenges. As we move forward into an unknown, we must remember that we are doing so together.

Please feel free to reach out to myself or Theresa Kuhns, Vice President of Government Affairs, at (301) 274-4406. Stay well and again, we look forward to working together.

Respectfully,

Chris Hill



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