



8440 Old Leonardtown Road, Suite 211, Hughesville, MD 20637
 1-888-340-8727 • (301) 274-4406 • Fax: (240) 254-2107
 info@somdrealtors.com • www.somdrealtors.com

President
Chris Hill

President-Elect
Tanya Redding

Vice President
Gregg Kantak

Secretary/Treasurer
Michael Funk

Immediate Past President
Judy Szyzborski

CEO
Richard J. Marshall

September 24, 2020

The Honorable Thomas Mike V. Miller, Jr

The Honorable Reuben Collins, II

The Honorable Arthur Ellis

The Honorable Buddy “BJ” Bowling

The Honorable CT Wilson

The Honorable Thomasina Coates

The Honorable Edith Patterson

The Honorable Amanda M. Stewart, M. Ed

The Honorable Susie Proctor

The Honorable Bobby Rucci ®

The Honorable Debra Davis

On behalf of the Southern Maryland Association of Realtors®, and our 1,800 professional members representing the real estate industry and our region’s housing market, I am writing to you in response to the joint public hearing held on September 15th regarding 2021 legislative proposals. Please find below our responses to several proposals as you move forward to your upcoming work session.

Proposal #2: During the 2020 session, SMAR originally supported the enabling legislation allowing for agritourism and we are encouraged again to see the legislation before this joint body. Agritourim allows property owners to use their own properties, within county regulations, to help diversify its economic future and generate new revenue dollars for the county. We support this proposal for the 2021 session.

Proposal #19: One of our top priorities as an association is to increase all funding to get Southern Maryland connected as a region. Rural broadband influences the housing market and a home’s value, and a lack of connection, sends away future Southern Maryland residents and potential tax revenues. To that end, we too are working on rural broadband initiatives with our coalition partners around the state.

Proposal #7: As the industry and region’s housing market experts, SMAR encourages at minimum, two seats, on the future re-creation of a Housing Authority Board to be held by licensed Realtors in good standing with primary memberships with SMAR. Our members have access to tools and data which will assist this Board in its decisions and have the best firsthand knowledge of housing affordability struggles our region has faced. We continue to be a willing and ready partner in assisting our neighbors to secure housing.



“The Voice for Real Estate in Southern Maryland”
 Member – National Association of REALTORS® and Maryland Association of REALTORS®
 The term REALTOR® is a registered collective membership mark that identifies a real estate professional who is a member of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® and subscribes to its strict Code of Ethics.



Proposal #8: As you know, for over 50 years, Realtors® have practiced fair housing in everyday business, from professional trainings, required education and as a day to day standard of practice. To that end, SMAR encourages 1 seat on any future creation of a local Human Relations and Civil Rights Commission, to be held by a licensed Realtor in good standing with primary membership with SMAR. We again continue to be a willing and ready partner in assisting our community to fair housing and eliminating any discriminatory practices as it relates to real estate.

Proposal #15: Rent stabilization or “rent control” in any form historically has negative long-term effects on the overall affordability to tenants and supply in markets across the country, two items Charles County already struggles with compared to its neighbors. Rent control has been shown to create housing shortages- case studies show landlords respond to rent control by reducing the rental unit supply by at least 15%. SMAR strongly encourages a **NO** vote on this proposal moving forward. We want to be part of the solution and county housing discussions to offer viable options which will help stabilize the market moving forward and therefore support future tenants.

Proposal #18: Simply put, the costs associated with implementing a new county rental registration program have the opposite effect of what we know to be county goals- affordable housing. From the cost to the county for administering such a program from staffing, initial inspections to all units within a timely manner where no landlord loses potential income, to registering thousands of units; this proposal makes it more expensive to be a renter in Charles County. The costs of licensing, inspections, and new repair codes will be passed down to the tenant. SMAR strongly encourages a **NO** vote on this proposal moving forward. We continue to offer our expert guidance and request to have a seat at the table on any housing discussions to offer viable options. In addition, given the status of unknown revenues during the state of emergency due to covid-19, SMAR also feels it is not the time to create and establish any new spending programs.

If you have any specific questions on our positions, please contact Vice President of Government Affairs, Theresa Kuhns. We look forward to working together to creating legislative solutions to current housing struggles in our region.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Hill', written over a large, light-colored circular scribble or watermark.

Chris Hill