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September 22, 2021

Charles County Board of Commissioners

RE: Support for the Rezoning Proposal and Amendment to the 2016 Comprehensive Plan:
Maryland Airport

I support this Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. I have served in the past as vice-Chair of the Economic Development/Transportation Committee and have been a long-time member of the Chamber of Commerce. I have previously submitted this statement to the Planning Commission

Support for Maryland Airport has been consistent for 75 years. Maryland Airport has been an essential part of the Charles County Community since 1945. Most recently, the Planning Commission recommended for approval in 2015 an Airport Land Use Plan which would make the Airport an economic engine for the County. That land use report contained appropriate commercial and industrial zoning on lands surrounding the airport. The economic opportunity and benefit to the county of this goal was undermined with the unilateral, broad-scale inclusion of the airport in the rezoning within the Watershed Conservation District. Consequently, most economic opportunities on lands adjacent to the airport cannot be realized without restoring the proposed zoning, at least to the approximately 30 acres that is topographically suited best for economic development.

Maryland Airport is listed as the 5th Goal in the County's Economic Strategic Plan. The report *FAA Aerospace Forecasts Fiscal Years 2020 – 2040* finds that general aviation will remain stable with opportunities for growth. In addition, the 2014 *United States Government Accountability Office Report to Congress on the Current and Future Availability of Aviation Engineering and Maintenance Professionals* projects there may be a shortage of aviation engineers, maintenance professionals and avionics technicians over the next 10 years. This creates an opportunity to provide jobs and job training for our Charles County high school and college graduates. Not acting to support the airport is underutilizing and wasting a valuable county resource in which federal, state, and county funds have already been invested. As an example of the huge economic potential from which Charles County residents could benefit, St. Mary's County is productively taking advantage of and wisely managing its Regional Airport as a county asset.

An environmental assessment on the new runway was completed years ago and many improvements are planned, are well under way, or have been completed. The airport has

enhanced its surrounding environment with a stormwater management system that is a state-of-the-art system designed in concert with the State of Maryland to ensure protection of the environment. Respect for environmental issues has already been negotiated and accommodated in previous agreements with environmental entities. It's economic and environmental compatibility were recognized in the late 1990's and early 2000's when local environmental groups executed an agreement with the State of Maryland in which fifty (50) acres next to the airport was donated to Charles County and designated for economic development related to the Maryland Airport. In twenty years since that agreement was executed technology has advanced at a staggering rate, only enhancing the airport's compatibility with the environment.

Maryland Airport is part of the federal and state integrated transportation plan, which has designated Maryland Airport as a reliever for Reagan National Airport. Its close proximity to Washington, D.C. makes it ideally located to take advantage of increased demand for corporate air travel, which, with COVID-19, is even more popular. Emergency responders, Civil Air Patrol, our local schools, veterans' organizations, and community organizations such as Patient Air Lift are all welcome at Maryland Airport, the only such airport in Charles County.

The county commissioners should continue to productively take advantage of and wisely cultivate the potential of its economic assets and resources for the benefit of all of its residents.

Respectfully submitted,



F. Hill Slowinski
Vice Chair, Economic Development Committee
Charles County Chamber of Commerce