



*To Lead, Advocate and Connect as the Voice of Business*

**HOUSE BILL 651: MONTGOMERY COUNTY - COUNTRY CLUBS AND GOLF COURSES - RATE OF ASSESSMENT AND TERM OF AGREEMENTS**

**WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

**FEBRUARY 19, 2019**

**OPPOSE**

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce ("MCCC"), as the voice of Montgomery County business, **opposes House Bill 651**, which, alters the rate at which the land of certain country clubs and golf courses is assessed for property tax purposes; alters the special use assessment for golf courses and country clubs in Montgomery County. In addition, agreements that are entered into between golf courses and country clubs in Montgomery County and the State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) may not exceed five consecutive years and may only be extended in increments of five years or less. The bill applies to any agreement that was entered into on or after the date that the constitutional amendment takes effect. For agreements that were entered into before June 1, 2020, the bill applies at the earlier of the expiration of the agreement or June 30, 2031.

The special use assessment was created to preserve open space and to support local businesses. These reasons are as valid today as they were when they were first proposed. Open, outdoor recreational space is hard to find in Montgomery County. While many of these clubs are member based, they make themselves available to charities to support many non-profit activities in Montgomery County.

The land that is not developed with buildings provides habitat, forested areas, wetlands and green space that is beneficial to the entire community.

More importantly, these venues provide steady employment for approximately 3,000 people. This, in turn, supports further economic activity in the community.

Country clubs are also an important amenity to attracting and retaining corporate headquarter companies that have high paying jobs and are critical to the sustainable growth of Montgomery County.

This is a short-sighted bill that would have many unintended negative effects for open space, employment and contributing to the overall quality of life in Montgomery County.

For these reasons, we request an **unfavorable report on House Bill 651**.