



THE VOICE OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY BUSINESS

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HHS Committee Meeting, Worksession #3 on Bill 12-16, 12/7/16
Comments by Ilaya Hopkins
Vice President, Government Relations and Communications

Thank you for the opportunity to be here. I speak on behalf of the Montgomery County Chamber as well as the other chambers with whom we have been working and the many businesses here today and watching the video stream.

We are grateful that you recognize that the need to engage the business community in this discussion. We can all agree, especially after the recent property tax increase, that we need a strong thriving local economic ecosystem in order to achieve our collective goals and fund our priorities. It is imperative that we support existing businesses and focus on attracting more economic activity to our county. We are concerned about the unknown impact of the proposed legislation on the well-being of our local economy.

Our organization, like other chambers, is member based and our mission is to accelerate the success of members. Why does this matter to you? Our members add NET NEW JOBS to our economy when they succeed and grow.

Our members come from a variety of industries. They have a range of experiences, perspectives and approaches to managing the myriad issues of running a business as they address needs in the marketplace. In Montgomery County, we are fortunate to have many employers and entrepreneurs who deliver solutions that address critical problems facing our society here and beyond. Whatever the business interest, all of these employers have a direct impact on the local economy – they add money to the tax revenue - when they are able to grow, add more jobs, and hire more people.

This legislation does not address our concern about the flat growth and revenue challenges the county continues to experience, as evidenced by the need to raise property taxes and an unwillingness to privatize liquor control.

As we have said from the beginning, Bill 12-16 is too much too soon with too little analysis on the real costs and impacts to this county specifically and our local economy as a whole.

We must examine this proposal in the broader context of:

- what else the County is doing (cumulative impact of myriad requirements),
- what else employers are doing (creative ways to attract and retain talent), and
- what is happening in the region.

Our collective goal should be to create access to more opportunities that go beyond low-skilled part-time positions. That is the only sustainable path to self-sufficiency.

We urge you to delay action on this proposed legislation until there is a better understanding of the impact it will have on Montgomery County businesses' ability to grow and succeed.