

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 230

(Howard County Delegation)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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Howard County Ethics Law - Clarifications and Enhancements  
Ho. Co. 1-10

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This bill specifies that, for purposes of certain Public Ethics Law disclosure provisions specific to Howard County, the definition of “applicant” includes, as to an application for a zoning regulation, any person authorized to sign the application. The bill also requires the administrative assistant to the zoning board and the administrator of the county council to prepare a summary report compiling all affidavits and disclosures filed under the Howard County-specific provisions *promptly on receipt*, instead of at least twice each calendar year. The bill also specifies that the summary report must be available for *immediate* inspection upon written request.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2010.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** None. The bill is not expected to directly affect Howard County finances.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** Under the Public Ethics Law, in Howard County, an applicant for a zoning map amendment, a zoning regulation amendment, or an individual/entity (“party of record”) that participates in a specified manner in the adoption and approval of a comprehensive zoning plan must file an affidavit stating whether the applicant (1) has

made specified political contributions to a candidate (or the candidate's political committee) for election as Howard County Executive or to the Howard County Council, who becomes elected, or to a slate (group, combination, or organization of candidates), or (2) is currently engaging in business with the Howard County Executive or a member of the Howard County Council.

An applicant or party of record that has made (or whose family member has made) a contribution or contributions must file a specified disclosure regarding the contribution(s).

The administrative clerk to the zoning board or the administrator of the county council, as appropriate, receives and maintains filed affidavits and disclosures as public records available for review by the general public during normal business hours. At least twice each calendar year, a summary report compiling all affidavits and disclosures must be prepared and be a matter of public record and available for inspection upon written request.

A person who knowingly and willfully violates these provisions is subject to a fine of up to \$5,000.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** State Ethics Commission, Howard County, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 28, 2010  
mam/mcr

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