

OPINION
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

By [FOR THE CAPITAL GAZETTE](#)

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Bill would put burden on businesses not currently taxed; urgency needed to mitigate floods | **READER COMMENTARY**



Joe Heller cartoon for the Capital Gazette.

Government should look internally first to cover budget shortfall

Anne Arundel County government officials often tout the importance of restoring trust in government, creating economic opportunity for all, implementing smart growth policies and promoting health and wellness.

They stress transparency and community engagement as being the core of their values. Yet I wonder ... are those just nice soundbites or really behaviors we see in our government officials?

To put this question into context, a little about me. I am a mother and wife having been born in Baltimore City and raised in Pasadena. Now a middle-aged woman living outside of Annapolis, my life has become what I made it.

I currently own and manage an affordable housing company, own and work at an aerospace consulting firm, own and distribute from my own charitable fund through the Community Foundation of Anne Arundel County and have sat as a board chair for a local non-profit. I pay my fair share of taxes and follow the law. These are not meant to impress, but instead to set the framework for an opinion.

Since December 2023 I have contacted our county government senior leadership six times to express an opinion on proposed Maryland House Bill 1515, what I will call a "tax increase in disguise." Let me repeat ... six times. And never a response. Not even a polite "we'll get back with you."

The stakes for all Marylanders are serious with House Bill 1515. If you have not followed the legislation, it essentially proposes to reduce the current state sales tax from 6% to 5%, but in parallel to expand the sales tax to 10 categories of services not currently taxed.

Those services could include legal and accounting services; everyday home maintenance ranging from cleaning to pest extermination to landscaping; personal care such as haircuts, massages and tattoos; fitness and personal training services; admission to recreational venues including sports, theaters, amusement parks and museums; and personal services spanning veterinary care to dry cleaning to even funeral services.

Proponents argue that the bill must be implemented in order to cover a government budget shortfall and predict the state would enjoy more than \$2 billion in increased tax revenues.

I strongly believe the government should look at other ways to cover revenue shortfalls. In looking at the bill this is going to put a substantial burden on businesses not currently taxed, whose increased costs would most likely be passed on to consumers.

In addition, government itself would need to get larger to manage and enforce the changes. Lastly, even with a reduction to 5% of the overall sales tax, I believe that is simply temporary and an optics play to get this bill passed.

I would rather see the government cover the budget shortfall by reducing its overall size (head count), streamlining, stressing efficiency and even reducing non-value-added services. The government should look internally first.

If the Golden Rule is the principle of treating others as one would want to be treated, then will constituents support elected officials the same as they support them? Still waiting for a call back to voice this opinion which I also know is shared by many other Marylanders...

Nicole Hassannia, Edgewater