

## **Local voices argue bills: Residents speak out about homes**

By Larry Carson, The Baltimore Sun

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Dec. 2--Howard County's state legislators are pondering emotional appeals from homeowners at both ends of the economic spectrum as mobile home park residents along U.S. 1 organize to prevent displacement while upscale western county seniors beset with sewage problems seek protections for future projects.

The homeowners turned out at an Ellicott City hearing held by legislators Thursday night, as did advocates and critics of using cameras to catch speeding motorists. They previewed some of the arguments the county's eight delegates and three state senators will consider before voting on local legislation in the 90-day General Assembly session that begins in January.

Supported by about 20 members of PATH -- **People Acting Together In Howard**, a church- and community-based civic action group -- mobile home park residents voiced support for a bill sponsored by most of the Democrats in the delegation that would give the residents a better chance to buy the land under their houses if a park owner decides to sell for redevelopment.

"There's an imbalance of property rights between the owners of mobile home parks and the residents. This legislation gives homeowners a better chance to save their homes," said Wendell Thompson, a PATH member from Bethany United Methodist Church. As county land values have risen, several parks along U.S. 1 have closed, displacing residents who owned their units but rented the land the units sat on.

"Do you know who we are, or how we affect your lives? Our neighborhoods are disappearing, but we won't, will we?" said Stacey Moran, a resident of Deep Run Mobile Home Park. There are few, if any, places in the county to put more mobile homes. Also, the units are expensive to move, and some are too old to relocate. Many mobile home residents are low-income, and many are elderly or disabled, the legislators heard.

"Where will we go? That is a question that scares all of us," Moran said.