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11115 Fawsett Road
Potomac, MD 20854
February 15, 2012

The Montgomery County Civic Federation strongly supports Bill HB720 in Annapolis to allow the Montgomery County Council to enact either a complete ban on roadside solicitations or the creation of a permit system to regulate this activity. We prefer an outright ban on begging, selling merchandise and soliciting donations alongside or in the public roadways. These activities are dangerous to the persons in the road, may cause rear end collisions as drivers suddenly stop without warning, slow traffic and increase congestion in our already failing intersections. Moreover, the ban on roadside solicitations in surrounding jurisdictions has caused an increase in these activities in Montgomery County, and the panhandlers have become more aggressive and more careless about walking in among stopped cars at traffic lights.

I can personally attest to the havoc created by firefighters soliciting contributions for the "Fill the Boot Campaign" along Route 206 in rural New Jersey on a summer weekend. The traffic was backed up for a half mile in each direction at the crossroads where they were working, and it took a full thirty minutes to make it through that one intersection.

While the Firefighters have a laudable goal in seeking to raise money for Muscular Dystrophy, a ban on roadside solicitations would not stop them from raising money. Like the Boy Scouts selling popcorn, the Girl Scouts selling cookies, the Salvation Army bell ringers filling their kettles, there are a host of locations on sidewalks and at the entrances to supermarkets where charitable fundraising may safely be undertaken without danger to the person involved or obstruction to traffic in the roads. We urge our delegation and the legislature in Annapolis to pass HB720 with no further quibbling. It's high time our local government had the authority to ban or regulate activities in and alongside our public roads as do other jurisdictions.

Sincerely,
Peggy Dennis, President
Montgomery County Civic Federation