



HILLSMERE ELEMENTARY PTA

November 15, 2017

Anne Arundel County Board of Education
2644 Riva Road
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Dr. Arlotto, and members of the Anne Arundel County Board of Education,

I am writing you on behalf of the Hillsmere Elementary School PTA (Hillsmere PTA) in regard to the Anne Arundel County Board of Education's (the Board) vote on November 1, 2017 on agenda item 5.13, approving an easement for Verizon Wireless to install and maintain a communications facility (mini-cell) on a BG&E power pole adjacent to Hillsmere Elementary School (Hillsmere). For the reasons described below, the Hillsmere PTA is requesting that the Board reconsider its November 1, 2017 decision and rescind its approval of the proposed easement for placement and maintenance of a mini-cell at Hillsmere.

The installment of a mini-cell on a pole adjacent to Hillsmere poses significant health dangers to both students and staff at Hillsmere. While some argue that radiation emitted from a mini-cell, or any type of cell tower, is not a health danger, data from independently, nonpartisan sponsored studies, indicate the opposite. Scientists and health care professionals are increasingly expressing concerns regarding both the overall roll-out of the 5G network, and the presence of mini-cells and cell towers near schools specifically. According to findings by the Environmental Health Trust, radiation from mini-cells is not small. Wireless antennas emit microwaves — non-ionizing radiofrequency radiation — essentially functioning as cell towers —and that radiation is expected to typically travel from 10 meters up to several hundred meters.

In a letter¹ to the United Nations, 236 scientists from 41 nations² have appealed for protection from non-ionizing electromagnetic field exposure, citing numerous peer-reviewed studies showing that exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF) generated by electric and wireless devices can cause increased “cancer risk, cellular stress, increase in harmful free radicals, genetic damages, structural and functional changes of the reproductive system, learning and memory deficits, neurological disorders, and negative impacts on general well-being in humans.”³ The letter also specifically requests that “children and pregnant women be

¹ The letter originally submitted in 2015, has since been updated in 2017.

² The scientists were specifically studying the biological and health effects of non-ionizing electromagnetic fields.

³ <https://emfscientist.org/index.php/emf-scientist-appeal>

protected”. In another appeal to the European Union on September 13, 2017, 180 scientists and doctors from 35 countries requested a moratorium on the roll-out of 5G, for telecommunication until potential hazards for human health and the environment have been fully investigated by scientists independent from industry. According to the scientists’ appeal, the current guidelines for EMF are obsolete - based on the outdated hypothesis that the critical effect of RF-EMF exposure relevant to human health and safety is heating of exposed tissue. However, scientists have proven that many different kinds of illnesses and harms are caused without heating (“non-thermal effect”) at radiation levels well below current international guidelines.⁴

In a September 18, 2017 letter to the Governor of California, Physicians for Safe Technology expressed that “[p]hysicians realize now that the incremental increases in daily radiofrequency (RF) exposure already exceed human health tolerance for many people” and “[w]e need to be reducing rather than increasing new sources of involuntary RF exposure in our communities.”

Another 2017 study⁵ compared people living close and far from cell antennas and found a significant impact on people living closer to cellular antennas. Damage was found in their blood that predicts cancer development.

Even professionals from the telecommunications industry have expressed reservations regarding the continuing placement of communications facilities before the full impact of such impact can be understood. The former president of Microsoft Canada, has stated that “our current use of wireless technology, specifically use of devices such as cell phones, could be much safer” and that while he supports the potential benefits with the next iteration of wireless technology, “neither my industry, nor any Federal agency in Canada or the United States can say unequivocally that this technology is safe. There are too many unknowns regarding this technology[.]” He also cited that “There is strong scientific evidence that the radiation we are now being exposed to from 2G, 3G and 4G has serious adverse effects on human health. The new spectrum proposed to be licensed has undergone very little research on human health effects. No Federal Agency, including Health Canada and the FCC can point to any peer-reviewed evidence-based science that shows 5G technology is safe.”⁶

Additionally, in a response to the impact of wireless radiation, Maryland became the first state in the nation to recommend a reduction in WiFi within schools. In its report, the Maryland State Children’s Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council cited the US National Toxicology Program findings of increased rates of rare malignant cancers in animals, as well as children’s unique vulnerability to the radiation.

We could go on and on citing studies and appeals from scientists and health care professionals to put a halt to placement of mini-cells near schools – but the bottom line is this: 1) there is

⁴ <https://ehtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/Scientist-5G-appeal-2017.pdf>

⁵ [“Impact of radiofrequency radiation on DNA damage and antioxidants in peripheral blood lymphocytes of humans residing in the vicinity of mobile phone base stations”](#) (Zothansiam et al, 2017; published in Electromagnetic Biology and Medicine).

⁶ <https://ehtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/C4ST-submission-to-Governor-Jerry-Brown-re-SB-649-1.pdf>

evidence that exposure to current wireless radiation causes harm; and 2) there are too many unknowns about the full impact of future wireless technology. Research also shows that children and pregnant women are the most vulnerable – two demographics most likely to be on school grounds on a regular basis. The actual placement of the pole cited in the easement – at the front corner of Hillsmere’s side parking lot – and across the street from another location frequented by children (PAL Park), only increases the concerns of the frequency in exposure.

Once the mini-cell is installed, it opens the door for Verizon – and the FCC – to have open use of the pole in question, which could potentially lead to multiple mini-cells being installed in different directions on the pole. Given the current evidence of the potential harm of exposure to wireless radiation – plus the very fact that the studies cited by those in support of mini-cells near schools all say “more studies are needed” – the Board should not be supporting the placement of a mini-cell on a pole adjacent to Hillsmere (or any school).⁷ We should not be placing our students and teachers in environments with mini-cells or other wireless technology that have not yet been supported by peer-reviewed, evidenced-based, studies.

Please reconsider the Board’s previous vote and rescind approval for the easement with Verizon Wireless at Hillsmere.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink that reads "India L Ochs". The script is cursive and fluid.

India L. Ochs
Hillsmere Elementary School PTA, President

Cc: Kimberly Terry, Principal, Hillsmere Elementary School
Christopher Trumbauer, Anne Arundel County Council
Amalie Brandenburg, Education Officer, Anne Arundel County

⁷ The presence of unidentified utility workers in the vicinity of the school is a secondary concern for student safety as well.