A RESOLUTION of the Baltimore County Council opposing the wastewater discharge permit request of the Mountain Christian Church, request #18DP3850, and urging the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to deny the permit request urging the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to require an on-site, no discharge option for the wastewater discharge permit request of the Mountain Christian Church, request #18DP3850, or if the permit request is granted, to require a strong Enhanced Nutrient Removal process as recommended by the Gunpowder Riverkeeper.

WHEREAS, Mountain Christian Church (the Church) is one of the largest and oldest churches in Harford County, operating in three locations around Harford County with regular service attendance of around 5,400 congregants. The Church began serving the community in 1828 at its original campus consisting of seventy acres at 1824 Mountain Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085 (Joppa Campus); and

WHEREAS, since 2017, the Church has planned to expand the Joppa Campus by adding several new buildings which require additional wastewater treatment capacity; and

WHEREAS, the Joppa Campus currently operates an MDE-approved private septic system under a groundwater discharge permit that allows an average discharge of 2,400 gallons per day, with a peak of 5,000 daily gallons. The Church estimates its expansion will require a
daily average sewage treatment capacity between 2,500 and 5,000 gallons with a daily peak treatment capacity of 10,000 gallons; and

WHEREAS, the Church’s proposal includes a permit request to MDE (request #18DP3850) for an above-ground private wastewater treatment facility which would replace the current underground septic system. To replace the groundwater discharge permit, the Church has requested a surface wastewater discharge permit to discharge up to 5,000 gallons per day of treated wastewater into an unnamed Indian Grave Run, a tributary that feeds into Little Gunpowder Falls; and

WHEREAS, the Little Gunpowder Falls Watershed is rural in character and forms much of the boundary between eastern Baltimore County and western Harford County and approximately half of the watershed is located in Baltimore County; and

WHEREAS, this watershed has large tracts of agricultural land, forested land and a low density of development as compared to most of the other watersheds in Baltimore County. The upper portion of the watershed is predominantly agriculture with the lower portion having an increased density of development including low density residential, industrial and commercial land use; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 4,000 acres of this watershed run through Gunpowder Falls State Park, Maryland’s largest state park. The Sweet Air section of the Park located in Baldwin is a popular destination for picnickers, hikers, horseback riders and mountain bikers; and

WHEREAS, the Church’s wastewater discharge proposal has the potential to harm the Little Gunpowder Falls Watershed by negatively impacting the water quality; and

WHEREAS, the Church sought approval from the Harford County Council of an expanded wastewater treatment proposal and on May 1, 2018, the Harford County Council unanimously voted in favor of Memorandum of Change #1 to Resolution 004-18 which
incorporated an expanded wastewater treatment proposal into the Harford County Master Water and Sewer Plan; and

WHEREAS, in a May 9, 2018 article, the Baltimore Sun reported that the Council heard testimony from Harford County residents who expressed concerns about the lack of public notice for the proposal. The article further stated that the “executive director of the Monkton-based Gunpowder Riverkeeper organization suggested the [Harford County] Council add a provision for enhanced nutrient removal to the memorandum of change. That process [would remove] even more nitrogen and phosphorous from wastewater discharge than other treatment methods, according to MDE’s website.”

WHEREAS, during this process, Baltimore County has neither been consulted nor notified, even though this proposal has the potential to affect many Baltimore County residents; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND, that the Baltimore County Council opposes the wastewater discharge permit request of the Mountain Christian Church, request #18DP3850, and urges MDE to deny the permit request urges MDE to consider an on-site, no discharge option for the wastewater discharge permit request of the Mountain Christian Church, request #18DP3850, or if the permit request is granted, to require a strong Enhanced Nutrient Removal process as recommended by the Gunpowder Riverkeeper.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Baltimore County Council urges the General Assembly to strengthen inter-jurisdictional communication requirements when an MDE permit of this type is requested near a jurisdictional border.