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Burtonsville, MD

**In Support of Bill 49-20: Human Rights and Civil Liberties –  
Discrimination in Rental Housing – Fair Criminal History and Credit Screening  
January 12, 2021**

My name is Eneshal Miller, I live in District 5, and I am writing in support of Bill 49-20, the Housing Justice Act. Thank you to Councilmembers Glass and Katz for your leadership on this bill.

After being homeless for 2 years before placing my name on a housing waitlist -- which I and others who were also struggling with homelessness came across in the Washington Post -- my family moved to Burtonsville, MD, in 2000. We moved to the Country Place Apartment Homes, where we now reside today, after bouncing from one apartment complex to the next because of actions taken by some and with not one protection in place to help families like mine.

Being homeless was not new to me or my family. We had always had trouble locating affordable housing in Metropolitan areas. I've actually moved over 10 times as a kid and over 5 times with my family now here in Montgomery County, Maryland.

When I first moved to Burtonsville, the landlord and staff would constantly harass me. When it first happened, I did as told and obeyed management. I couldn't lose my section 8 housing. The management company treated me horribly, entering my unit without notice, spreading rumors, yelling at me in front of my son and staff.

My unit had a lot of issues: the landlord refused to provide me with the two bedroom apartment I was promised. I was then provided with a voucher by HOC in 2002-2003. During this time, I provided daycare services and worked at Childway, a daycare center in Burtonsville. My baby was with me. It was the best I could do to protect my child.

I asked the landlord to place me on a waiting list for a second room. The landlord refused to provide my family with a two bedroom, and also prevented me from moving out. When I was offered a 2 bedroom apartment in Virginia, the landlord refused to call back the leasing company. I ended up homeless in Prince George's County with a voucher that was soon to run out if I did not find a place. I eventually located a 2 bedroom apartment in MD, in 2004, after the leasing staff said to me "I'm so sorry, I will make sure you move," and did just that. Gave me

the direct number and wrote a letter and called the landlord at the new apartment complex, with an honest review of my time at Country Place from 1999-2003.

I had been attacked verbally so many times by management and staff. I was hopeful when I received the voucher that this would be a new opportunity, and my child would have a home. In 2004-2007, I took an apartment at Aston Manor. The area was nice and I liked the community. Everyone was friendly, so I signed up for the Family Self Sufficiency Program in hopes of owning a home (FSS) through the HOC. But after 3 months, I was informed I could no longer participate because of having been arrested. During a walk to the grocery store with a group of neighbors, a gentleman, a friend of my neighbor, offered us a ride. I said thanks, I placed my bags of groceries in his vehicle, and he proceeded to take me home. The vehicle was pulled over by an officer in the same community and I was arrested. I was then instructed by the courts to adhere to urine testing weekly, for 3-6 months. I wrote the Attorney General and expunged the charge 3 years later. This charge prevented me from earning an income. I could not advertise as a childcare provider anymore. And it prevented me from being housed at times. So I sought out programs in the community to help myself and other residents, like the Section 3 program through HUD.

After four years of living in Aston Manor, the landlord informed me that I was said to have too many guests over my place. That was true -- I had my family, including my younger brother and his kids, over for holidays, birthdays, breakfasts, and dinners. My family endured constant discrimination. This was disruptive, and it destroys families. In 2009, I moved to Drings Reach Apartment homes, and after six months I would be told again of heavy traffic in my home. I could not maintain a business like this anymore. I left school again, I was constantly being harassed, and my family would be homeless for about 3 months. I ended up in District Heights, and was only given 90 days to find housing. I found a townhouse, and signed up again for the Family Self Sufficiency program. They later informed me I had violated the program's rules, and I was removed from the program. I discovered that the rule I had inadvertently broken was failure to report what they saw as income, but was truly a transportation stipend for a year-long medical study. Kicked off of the program, I faced the risk of eviction, and once again had to find new housing, which I later had to move out of as well -- and where I was discriminated against by fellow residents for having a housing voucher.

I now live back in Country Place Apartments and a lot has changed for my family. But nothing has changed with regards to the discrimination I've faced for demanding affordable housing and racial equity. I have served three years on the Montgomery County Interagency Commission on Homelessness Maryland as the Public Representative, and I founded The People's Committee to assist with better outcomes for residents. I've always tried my best to be a good neighbor and mom. It's hard, but I know I'm making a difference. Please help us pass 49-20 to stop those who

discriminate against families, people of color, and people who have experienced homelessness or incarceration. Thank you for your consideration.

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