

Montgomery County Council

Testimony on behalf of County Executive Marc Elrich on Bill 30-21 Taxation – Landlord-Tenant Relations – Restrictions During Emergencies, Extended Limitations Against Rent Increases and Late Fees

September 14, 2021

1:30 p.m.

Good afternoon Council President Hucker and Councilmembers, my name is Aseem Nigam, Director of the Department of Housing and Community Affairs. I am here on behalf of the County Executive in support of Bill 30-21 Extended Limitations Against Rent Increases and Late Fees.

This Bill extends for one year after the expiration of the public health emergency the limit on rent increase notices at the voluntary rent guideline, which currently is 1.4%. Such protection is important because the damage done by COVID to our economy and many of our residents is severe and long-lasting.

Throughout the pandemic, the County, through HHS, has been helping tenants who are behind on rent due to COVID by providing up to \$12,000 in COVID Rent Relief. And DHCA has been collaborating with HHS to provide tenants court-based legal assistance through Maryland Legal Aid and Homeless Persons Representation Project, along with one-on-one support for tenants through CASA, Housing Initiative Partnership, Latino Economic Development Center and Renters Alliance. At the same time, we have been preserving affordable housing, including 564 units at Halpine View where we also leveraged county land to achieve more deeply affordable housing.

The economic recovery is going to take longer than the health recovery. Many of the jobs people used to hold no longer exist or residents have seen their hours cut. It will take time for people to prepare for and access employment. Thus, there is a need to continue supporting people who are struggling to pay rent while the economy recovers and people adjust to the new economy.

This Bill is reasonable. By extending protections against the potential of large rent increases, we can help Montgomery County renters to remain housed while our economy and our residents emerge from the severe economic impacts of COVID.

Thank you.