

**March 28, 2023**

**Anna T. Levy  
Rockville, MD 20852**

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE HOME ACT, BILL 16-23;  
AND IN OPPOSITION TO THE 'ANTI-RENT GOUGING' BILL 15-23**

My name is Anna T. Levy, a resident of Rockville, Montgomery County Council District 4. I am submitting this testimony **in support of Bill 16-23, HOME Act and in opposition to Bill 15-23, 'Anti-Rent Gouging' Bill.**

Safe and stable housing has far reaching economic, health, and social benefits to individuals, families, and communities, and is key to reducing racial inequities. Renters routinely have little agency when faced with threats to maintaining stable housing. We have an obligation to ensure fairness in tenant/landlord law, to ensure safe living conditions, and to prevent homelessness.

I am fortunate to be able to afford housing in a safe and stable neighborhood. But many of my neighbors, more than a third of whom, already pay 40 or 50% or more of their incomes toward rent. Large rent increases force people to search for difficult to find - more affordable housing, and in worst cases, to live in fear of, and face, eviction. Although high rents may attract wealthy residents and improve the County's tax base, they push out people who want to continue to live in, benefit from, and contribute to our communities. Conversely, features which attract people to our community, such as excellent schools, are negatively affected when even our educators can't afford to live here. When a community becomes more and more unaffordable, longtime residents are forced to leave; destabilizing their immediate family's lives and their communities.

Is this the Montgomery County that we strive to create? Montgomery County thrives on the diversity of our residents and we need to make sure that all of our residents can thrive. The HOME Act (Bill 16-23) does not freeze rent increases but helps to provide predictability and affordability to all Montgomery County renters. Renters and landlords can plan for reasonable increases in costs of living and doing business over time. Bill 15-23, which will effectively codify unaffordable, double-digit rent increases, will not only cause displacement of already at-risk families, significant yearly increases in rents also discourage those who are more able to afford them and making our communities less welcoming.

Montgomery County needs more affordable housing. Stabilizing rents is just one part of the solution to addressing that need.

**I thank Councilmembers Jawando and Mink for introducing this important bill and urge the members of the Montgomery County Council to approve the HOME Act, Bill 16-23 to help to keep people in their homes and strengthen our communities.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this critical legislation.