

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

I'm writing to express my support for the HOME act. The opposing measure with increases of 8% + CPI proposed by some members of the council is way too high and shows a blatant disregard for the real issues renters face in this county. Housing costs are out of control and nearly half of renters in this county are rent burdened, with many more severely so and that's simply an unacceptable level of suffering. Renters deserve better. With so many renters barely able to afford an apartment as is, those rent hikes will come either by displacement or by driving people further into poverty, often sacrificing basic needs such as skipped meals and missed medical appointments. Allowing landlords 8%+ rent hikes while tenants are struggling will not stop these negative outcomes nor provide substantial relief for tenants and we need to do much better than that.

For me personally, as a renter in a rent stabilized Takoma Park apartment, rent stabilization means being able to survive day to day expenses in the face of serious illness and long term disability in my family. It has often not been easy to make ends meet as is and I don't know what we would've done or how we would've managed if I had seen a rent hike through many of the toughest periods, but having a consistent rent payment means that I have basic stability in my home. Takoma Park is a bastion of affordable housing in the county, and has an engaged community of long term renters who are able to stay in their homes despite the rapidly increasing property values of their neighbors. One neighbor's wealth shouldn't mean another's poverty but without meaningful rent stabilization that is far too often the case. I believe the residents in the rest of the county deserve that same stability and human decency.

Homeowners already have fixed mortgage rates and a yearly cap on property tax increases that in real terms results in lower cost increases for even upper class homeowners than the rent hikes in the HOME act, much less the anti gouging measure, would allow for low income tenants. That yearly costs have already been capped for homeowners with no protection for renters is a deeply unjust discrepancy and renters are rightfully seeking the stability that homeowners in this county already have.

I have looked through the available evidence on rent control policies in other places, studies such as David Sims study on Cambridge MA, the Stanford study about San Francisco and Gilderbloom and Ye's study of dozens of municipalities in NJ and many more. They all showed rent control as a success - renters, especially low income individuals, maintained stability and stayed in their homes, rent stayed low in controlled and uncontrolled units and notably these policies were shown to have no effect on the rate of new construction. The actual economic evidence simply doesn't match the rhetoric that is used to oppose rent stabilization measures.

When it comes to rent stabilization we don't have to choose between sound economics and doing the right thing for tenants, meaningful rent stabilization works for both.

Passing meaningful rent stabilization such as the HOME act is the right thing to do.

Thank you,
Jason Starbird-Tierney
Takoma Park