



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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**Montgomery County Council Public Hearing
Landlord-Tenant Relations, Bills 15-23 and 16-23
Testimony in Support of Affordable Rental Housing in Montgomery County
March 28, 2023
Submitted by: Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club**

Re-imagining how to achieve a commonsense affordable housing policy should prioritize the human dignity of the residents of Montgomery County.

The Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC) applauds the County Council for addressing the issue of affordable rental housing in Montgomery County. The pandemic put an incredible strain on an already unfair and disorganized tenant-landlord relationship in the county. Therefore, we believe that a commonsense rent regulation program is one that will help tenants stay in their homes and allow landlords to conduct long-term planning. Many cities across the country are moving in the direction of rent cap ordinances, rent control, or rent stabilization regulations and policies to address the dual crisis of rent instability *and* a housing shortage.

The county also has a serious supply and demand problem. We need more rental units, specifically affordable rentals units. The policy under consideration should not incentivize more upper-end rental units. Therefore, we need both fair rental policies and appropriate housing development incentives. WDC believes that a comprehensive and justice-oriented housing policy should consider quantity, quality, and cost of available housing. The [Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments](#) estimates that Montgomery County needs to add 41,000 housing units in the next ten years to meet housing demand and at least 75 percent of this housing will need to be affordable to low- and middle-income households.

However, we need to first stop the bleeding while we work to enable supply to catch up with demand. Furthermore, it will take time for new affordable housing stock to promote housing stability. It will take time to achieve the well-recognized non-monetary benefits that come from individuals and families being in a neighborhood for a long time, where they can afford to live close enough to walk their kids to school or have a reasonable and reliable commute to work and form the bonds that support healthy community. "Economists tend to slight the importance tenants attach to security of tenure ... A housing unit is a tenant's home. Coming to know her neighbors and the local shops, she will develop at least some sense of community." ¹ This means we not only need new housing stock, but we must also maintain the affordability of current housing units.

What is the maximum rent increase that will both stimulate the maintenance and growth of affordable units, while also maximizing low- to middle- income families' ability to remain in their homes while they work to achieve economic stability? This is the core aspect of any rent stabilization policy that WDC wants to highlight in this testimony. Regardless of the rent caps being proposed, we urge each member of our council to consider how critical it is to be able to afford housing for your family, without indefinitely relying on assistance: it is a foundational building block for achieving a sense of self-worth and pride – it's about preserving the human dignity of each of us, and generating stable, thriving communities.

¹ Merrefield, Clark (2021, Dec. 8). Rent control and stabilization policies: 4 studies to know/ Research focuses on dollars and cents (para. iv). <https://journalistsresource.org/economics/rent-control-regulation-studies-to-know/>