

Mary Fernandes, Ph.D.



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

To the members of the Montgomery County Council:

My name is Mary Fernandes, and I’m a resident of District 6. My partner and I rent a small, 2-bedroom home in Glenmont. We previously rented a single-family home in Wheaton, but because of terrible housing conditions (mice, frequent basement floods, mold) and unresponsiveness from our landlord/property manager, we were forced to relocate. My partner and I are both young professionals. I work as a postdoctoral psychologist at the Washington D.C. Veterans Affairs Medical Center. I make \$52,000 a year, and my partner makes just over \$45,000 a year, both before taxes. We currently pay \$2,250 in rent each month. We weren’t able to consider smaller apartments or homes, as I spend 2 days a week working from home, and the nature of my job forces me to have a private space where I can see patients virtually without accidentally violating their right to confidentiality. As you can tell from our income and monthly rent, that leaves us with, at most, a combined \$5,000 per month to cover costs of food, utilities, healthcare, car expenses, insurance, school loan payments, and more. I care for dozens of Veterans with mental illnesses each week, and the stress of making ends meet while carrying the vicarious pain and trauma of my patients is sometimes paralyzing. I can’t imagine how my partner and I will continue to afford basic needs, let alone save for the future, if our rent increases. Housing costs are our largest expense, and we live very frugally, so rent stabilization would go a long way in our lives, and by extension, in allowing me to focus more of my mental energy on the communities and Veterans who I serve.

**The Montgomery County Council has an opportunity to improve the lives, futures, and mental health of countless residents by passing the HOME Act (bill 16-23).** I am one of many who are pleading with you to do what we know, through fact and testimony, is the best thing for our entire community. As is the case with me, imagine the ripple effect that rent stabilization will have on all of the other communities that we each serve. If we put a cap on rent increases, imagine the teachers who can better focus on their students rather than having to look for new jobs or new homes. Imagine the single parents who can be spared the heart-wrenching conversation with their children about why they have to relocate *again* in order to afford their housing. Imagine the children who are impacted by housing insecurity but who might finally get to focus on the only thing that they should be – learning and growing. That’s what the HOME Act is about – it is about protecting our most vulnerable from exploitation and ensuring that our communities can collectively thrive. And *you* have the power to do that.

Thank you for considering my testimony,  
Mary