

Michelle Ripari
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District 4

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

I am a renter in Montgomery County and currently live in District 4. I'm testifying in support of the HOME Act (Bill 16-23) and against the 'Anti-Rent Gouging' Bill (Bill 15-23). I am urging the council to pass the HOME Act and cap rent increases at no more than 3% per year, rather than codifying 10+% yearly increases under Bill 15-23.

As a renter who has lived in both Wheaton and Silver Spring over the past few years, I support the HOME Act for a number of reasons. We are currently in a cost-of-living crisis, and rent stabilization is necessary to prevent further displacement. Already, evictions are sky-rocketing since the temporary COVID stabilization ended, and our most vulnerable communities are being ripped apart by unfair and untenable rent increases. Rent control is proven to prevent evictions and displacement, while good housing policy is also needed to solve the underlying issues and create affordable housing for all in the long-term. The HOME Act is a step in this direction, it disincentivizes vacancies through a vacancy tax and funds more affordable housing.

The HOME Act will also bring stability and predictability back to tenants in Montgomery County. I was incredibly lucky to be able to resign my lease during the temporary COVID stabilization, knowing that I would be able to continue living in my current apartment. This has allowed me to financially plan for my future and put down roots in my community. Without those protections in place, I and many others would not have been able to do that.

I am also urging the council to not pass the 'anti-rent gouging' Bill 15-23, which would codify rent increases of 8%+CPI per year. Passed now, this bill would permit rent increases of over 12%! This is completely unaffordable! Furthermore, there is no guarantee that renters facing these increases will be able to access necessary rental assistance. This bill would accelerate displacement and evictions in our most marginalized communities.

I urge the council to support the HOME Act and protect renters in the city. We deserve to have stable and affordable housing. This bill is a step in the right direction towards achieving that goal. Thank you for your time and consideration.