


**Testimony in Support of the HOME Act, Bill 16-23
And in Opposition to the “Anti-Rent Gouging” Bill 15-23**
Mike Heywood



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To the members of the Montgomery County Council,

My name is Mike Heywood, and I’m a resident of Silver Spring, specifically in District 4, represented by Kate Stewart. I’m testifying **in favor** of the HOME Act, Bill 16-23, which would guarantee real rent stability by limiting increases to 3%; and **against** Bill 15-23, which would subsidize rent gouging by allowing for increases up to 8% plus CPI.

I have lived in Montgomery County all my life. I was lucky in that my parents were homeowners with stable jobs, so we didn’t have to somewhere else every few years as I was growing up. I never had to worry about changing schools, leaving friends behind and starting over with new ones. I never had to make the changes to my daily routine that a move would require. I never had to worry that there wouldn’t *be* a new place to move to when we moved out of the one we had.

I was lucky that I had stability in my living situation growing up. That kind of stability should not be a matter of luck.

But as long as housing is treated as a commodity, to be bought and sold and passed around at the whim of the market, that stability is a luxury afforded only to the affluent. As long as landlords are free to hike the rents whenever they see fit, to drive their residents out in favor of a “better class” of tenants, that stability is out of reach for the vast majority of people.

This is why, **at a minimum**, we need to pass real rent stabilization, to limit the amount the rent can go up each year.

During the worst days of the COVID-19 pandemic, this council understood that stable housing was matter of basic survival, and that in that time of emergency, eviction meant death. So it enacted emergency rent stabilization and an eviction moratorium, to prevent mass displacement in the middle of a pandemic. As Council Member Will Jawando has said a couple of times, “the sky did not fall.” Landlords still made profits off of their control of the means of subsistence. But for the capitalist landlords, this was not enough. A steady rate of profit was not enough. No, they had to keep the line going up into infinity.

Since the end of the emergency stabilization, that is exactly what they’ve been doing. Having been denied their right to gouge for a while, they’ve been making up for lost time. Organizing with Montgomery County DSA and the MORE Coalition in support of the HOME Act, I’ve seen this process firsthand:

- At the Cinnamon Run Apartments in Glenmont, I saw eviction notices at practically every other door.
- At the District Court, where landlord-tenant cases were being heard, there were nearly 300 cases brought forward in a single day! This, I am told, was a slow day.

We started organizing for rent stabilization to put an end to this gouging, and **the HOME Act, Bill 16-23**, is the legislative expression of that effort. It would limit annual rent increases to a **maximum** of 3% annually (\$60, assuming a rent of \$2000). This would allow people to budget out their rent well in advance, without worrying about sudden increases. It would allow people to plan ahead.

Compare this to the other bill brought forward, **Bill 15-23**, which would allow increases of **at least 8%**, and that amount only if inflation literally stands still. In any likely real scenario, the increase would be far higher than that. This bill, under the name of rent stabilization, in practice **does nothing but legalize rent gouging**.

I urge you to **pass the HOME Act, Bill 16-23**, and **reject Bill 15-23**, to enact real rent stabilization in Montgomery County.

Best regards,
Mike Heywood