

Naeem Alam



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

Dear members of the County Council,

My name is Naeem Alam, and I am a resident of District 5 in Silver Spring. I'm testifying to ask that the Council support the HOME Act, Bill 16-23, which would protect my community by limiting rent increases to 3%; and to ask that the Council oppose Bill 15-23, which would tear my community apart by permitting absurd 8% rent increases.

I was born and raised in Silver Spring. I was fortunate that my parents both had college degrees, so they could afford the mortgage on our home. But my aunts, uncles, and grandparents were not so lucky. Their wages were not enough to pay the sky-high rents in Montgomery County, so they had no choice but to live with us. There were always between 8 and 11 of us in our four-bedroom home at any given time, and this resulted in constant conflict over bills, utilities, food and more. I remember the endless yelling matches and chaos as my family tried to figure out who would pay for what. The fights were so frequent that the rare days when no one was fighting felt like holidays. The emotional scars from this type of environment stay with you forever.

However, as I grew older, I realized just how lucky I was. Many of my friends came from households where no one in the family could afford a home, so everyone had to rent. And as their landlords raised the rent mercilessly, they lived in silent fear of eviction. I learned that Councilmember Mink and Councilmember Jawando were bravely fighting these increases, but that 7 of their colleagues, who were influenced by dark money from for-profit developers, were getting in the way. This compelled me to break my silence.

If we had 3% rent stabilization, like in the HOME Act, then my friends would never have lived in fear. My family would never have doubled up. All of us would have been spared physical, mental and financial trauma. But 7 of our Councilmembers are choosing not to let us have that, because of dark money from "Progressives for Progress" developers.

We need all Councilmembers to stand with us by passing the HOME Act and rejecting Bill 15-23. We cannot afford the 8% rent increases of Bill 15-23. We cannot afford to have 7 Councilmembers be influenced by dark money from "Progressives for Progress" developers. I urge each of you to stand with us, or else we will have no choice but to vote you out. Please do the right thing: support the HOME Act and reject Bill 15-23, so that we can all have the peace and stability that we deserve. Thank you.

-Naeem Alam