

Olivia Delaplaine



Council District 4

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

My name is Olivia Delaplaine, I live in Long Branch, and I am submitting testimony in support of the HOME Act, Bill 16-23 and against Bill 15-23. I live in District 4 and am a constituent of Councilmember Kate Stewart. I'm asking the Council to support the HOME Act because as a renter who grew up in Montgomery County, I know that unchecked rent increases over 8% will prevent me and so many of my friends, family, and neighbors from staying in the county and building our futures here.

I live in Long Branch now, a beautiful neighborhood with a Takoma Park mailing address that unfortunately falls outside of the official Takoma Park city limits. That means we fall outside of the rent stabilization protections that the city of Takoma Park offers. In the three years I've lived here and more than 7 years I've worked here, I've heard countless stories of people who have been forced to look for housing in Prince George's, Frederick, or in an entirely different state because an investor bought their building, refused to fix any of the maintenance issues in their building, and raised their rent up by 10 or more percent to the point where they could no longer afford to stay. I have felt really sad seeing so many people move away, especially neighbors with young children, seniors, or other young people my own age. My own rent only went up exactly 3% when I renewed my lease last year, which has enabled me to stay in the neighborhood. My fiance and I share the unit-- he is a public school teacher and I work at a nonprofit--but already $\frac{1}{3}$ of our income is going toward our rent, and our wages don't increase in a way that would enable us to afford an increase of more than 2-3%. We dream of eventually buying a home and starting a family in the county, staying close to our family, friends, and jobs that are here, but unless we pass rent stabilization with a 3% cap, we wouldn't be able to.

This issue is also important to me because my elderly father has been in the process of downsizing from a home in Bethesda that he is unable to maintain due to his increasingly limited physical mobility. He found an apartment that is only just barely within his budget, partially due to the fact that though he is 78 years old, he is still working and earning a salary. If his rent goes up more than 2 or 3% in the next few years, he won't be able to afford it, much less retire. I hope the council passes the HOME Act so that seniors who are living on a fixed income or who are hoping to retire soon can either downsize to new rental units in their same neighborhood or stay in their existing rental units. I don't want to have to worry about whether my dad can stay housed and stay close by, and I don't want anyone else to have to worry about that for their own parents, either.

I urge the council to support the HOME Act and cap rent increases at 3% to allow lifelong county residents like me and my father to stay in the county, to allow families the stability they need to stay close together, and to give those of us hoping to start new families the opportunity to put down roots here and grow. Thank you and please pass the HOME Act (16-23) and reject 15-23.