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Gaithersburg, MD, 20878
Montgomery County Racial Equity (MORE) Network



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE HOME ACT BILL 16-23 AND
AGAINST THE “ANTI-RENT GOUGING” BILL 15-23**

Dear Montgomery County Council Members,

My name is Omodamola Williams, a resident of Gaithersburg, District 3, and devoted single father of two little girls in MCPS. I am the community coordinator of the Montgomery County Racial Equity Network, whose housing coalition has helped lead tenant protection work for the last few years in our County. The MORE Network urges you to pass meaningful rent stabilization: support the HOME Act, Bill 16-23, and please strongly oppose bill 15-23.

Being a full time single parent, my job and children are my top priority. I have many expenses to manage. I lived paycheck to paycheck, even though I worked a full time job, before losing my job due to COVID and having to move to a family shelter with my young daughters. Then, my increase was lower than what it would be with the lack of protections from Bill 15-23. And now, my landlord already is abusing their authority, refusing to do basic maintenance for my unit. Even worse, they have increased my rent so high that I cannot afford it. Now, fear I will end up losing my home and checking into a shelter with my two young daughters, *again*. I don't want to go through that again.

But this isn't just my story. It's the story of thousands of renters who are on the brink of, or are already experiencing homelessness. It's the story of disproportionately Black and Latinx renters, who have been set up to fail by generations of racist housing policies across the country and right here in Montgomery County.

[According to the Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statement for the previous temporary rent stabilization Bill, 30-21](#), “Low-wealth and low-income households have been negatively impacted by the financial burdens associated with the pandemic. These households lacking access to affordable and safe housing, also known as secure housing, are also at greater risk of experiencing evictions and homelessness. Many of these households who are disproportionately Black and Latinx in Montgomery County were at

risk for evictions and homelessness prior to the pandemic.”

The fact that Black and Latinx renters experience acute housing insecurity is backed by the data:

- Among renter households in 2019, rent-burden (expending 30 percent or more of income on rent) was experienced among 66 percent of Latinx renters and 60 percent of Black renters compared to 40 percent of White renters and 33 percent of Asian renters.
- [Among Round 4 COVID Relief Rental Program clients](#) (approved as of March 15, 2023), 45 percent were Black and 23 percent were Latinx while 8 percent were White and 2 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander.
- *Among families experiencing homelessness in 2020, 78 percent were Black.*

You, leaders of the Montgomery County Council, have an opportunity to choose between a bill that will stabilize rent at 3% max, preventing our County’s rapidly-increasing eviction rates to climb, or a bill that will make it **legal** for landlords to make tenants homeless, with the claim that money we don’t have will pay the difference.

The choice that supports racial equity is clear. Pass the HOME Act, and take action to make sure tenants like me won’t be retraumatized, again, and again, and again, by our failed housing system.

Thank you for your time.

Omodamola E Williams.