

Zoe Duni



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

My name is Zoe Duni. I live on 5600 Luxemburg Street in Rockville in District 4 and I am testifying because I am asking the County Council to support bill 16-23 and reject bill 15-23. I am a student at Walter Johnson High School and I am a constituent of Councilmember Kate Stewart.

There have been many times in my life where I have been forced to move- I have lived in many different parts of the county. Because of this, I know firsthand how challenging it is to have to reinvent your life due to a new home. For anyone, it is an unfamiliar community- a new, often unsteady adjustment.

For students in particular though, it changes everything. You have new teachers, new friends, new classmates, new administrators, new neighbors. It creates a whole new routine. It's not only a change in setting- it's a change in the whole context of our lives. And this instability makes it harder for students to maintain their normal routine - to get work done for school, to have fun with their friends, to find their place. It can be isolating to be in a new place with new people, to have your childhood scattered across different areas.

Housing instability is a huge cause of this. If you can't afford your own home, then you are inevitably being pushed out of your community. Moving is no longer a choice- it becomes a necessity in order to afford a place to stay. It's a chaotic situation and one that students shouldn't have to be in.

As I have mentioned, I know the feeling of moving often. I know how hard it is to have to adjust again and again to a new environment- it's an additional toll on students' already stressful lives. And if people are being displaced due to incredibly high rent increases, then students will be forced to bear this weight.

I don't want students to feel the same way that I have. I don't want them to endure an extra burden- the burden of remodeling their lives over something that could easily be fixed by a policy being introduced in their local government. They have a right to stable homes just as much as any resident in Montgomery County.

The more I talk to tenants through canvassing, the more I talk to students working in local organizations, the more I talk to the people around me living in Montgomery County, the more I am convinced that this is what they need. I have heard countless stories (many of which are in the HOME Act bill) of rent increases pushing people out, creating stress in students' lives, forcing tenants to live in unacceptable conditions to afford rent.

This is why I am asking the County Council to support this policy. I am asking them to act like the adults in the room and take care of our students and our community. I am asking them to enact this simple policy that already reflects the average rent in the county. I am asking them to hear our community members rather than focus on a mathematical formula for their lives.

I am asking them for stability- for students and for all tenants in the community.

Pass the HOME Act and reject Bill 15-23.