

I am speaking in favor of Bill 16-23 the Home Act which sets the cap at a maximum of 3% rent increase for housing in Montgomery County. Our county has become increasingly diverse including many immigrants who are low-income. Most low-income residents are paying 50% or more of their monthly take-home salary for rental housing. A large percentage are forced to hold two or three jobs to accomplish this feat. The skyrocketing rental fees since pandemic rent stabilization was lifted have forced the low-income immigrant populations to find more affordable housing, many times out of the county or ultimately face homelessness. This displacement impacts community resilience as residents become transient. It may break the cultural bonds and social cohesion that cement the neighborhood and have an impact on small businesses central to the community for services and employment.

As we deal with the impacts of a warming climate, we need to provide opportunities for county workers to live close to employment which will increase workforce reliability even in inclement weather. The need to drive long distances for employment will be reduced as jobs can be accessed by walking, bicycling, or by transit, close to affordable housing.

The Landlord- Tenant Relations Anti Rent Gauging, Bill 15-23 permits both rent increases of up to 8% and many exceptions for adhering to this requirement. Only a 5% increase in rent may cost tenants thousands more a year and force a choice between paying rent or purchasing needed food, medications, and paying for transit to work. Prince Georges County recently passed the Rent Stabilization Act, a comparable bill to The HOME Act, we can join our neighbor and provide affordable housing for all in Montgomery County.