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March 24, 2003

### Testimony in Support of Bill 16-23: The HOME Act

Members of the County Council, Council staff and fellow residents. My name is Michael Rubin and I am privileged to serve as the Interim Executive Director at IMPACT Silver Spring. IMPACT's focus is to engage residents in efforts to help us achieve a more racially and economically equitable Montgomery County. Our network of individuals and families continue to struggle with the ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. I have heard so many heartbreaking stories of people who have fallen dramatically behind in their rent as well as many who kept their rent current, but needed to forgo spending on food or medication to do so.

We have a widening racial wealth gap in our nation and in our county, which is exacerbated by rents that increase at a pace that far outpace wage increases for so many. You have 2 bills before you that ostensibly will help stabilize these rising rents. Let me suggest that one of these bills, the Home Act, Bill 16-23, actually does so by limiting rent increases to 3% annually. The other, Bill 15-23 the so-called Anti Rent Gouging bill allows for double digit rent increases in these inflationary times. I know that at IMPACT, we struggle to provide annual salary increases of 3-4%. There is no way our staff who are renters could afford a rent increase this year of 10 %, 12% or greater as allowed by Bill 15-23. I am not suggesting that either bill will solve the racial wealth gap crisis but the HOME Act will slow the bleeding while the Anti Rent Gouging bill will dramatically worsen the crisis.

Montgomery County's Racial Equity and Social Justice Act demands that we pay attention to the racial equity and social justice impacts of bills that come before this body. It is very clear to me that the Home Act will do substantially less harm from a racial equity perspective than the Anti Rent Gouging Bill. You have an obligation to look at both of these bills through a racial equity and social justice lens. One of the them, the Home Act can survive such scrutiny, while the other, the Anti Rent Gouging Bill, fails miserably. I am actually fairly shocked by the number of cosponsors on Bill 15-23.

This is a case where doing the right thing, complying with the Racial Equity and Social Justice Act, and actually helping those who are struggling with rapidly increasing rents means simply passing the Home Act with it's 3% cap on rent increases with no weakening amendments.

Thank you.