

## Testimony in Support of the HOME Act

Council President Glass

Council Vice President Andrew Friedson

Honorable County Council

Greetings. My name is Robert Stubblefield and I am a resident of Montgomery County. I am also an activist and organizer with groups such as the Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition, DSA, Young People for Progress and I write this in support of Bill 16-23, The HOME Act which caps rent increases at 3%.

This bill is necessary because of the simple fact that in Montgomery County, the rent is too damn high with many people working multiple jobs just to make sure that rent is paid. Despite the fact that we are still in a pandemic and that people who want to make Montgomery County their home, the fact that we are seeing rents go up in amounts of 10-15% is not only wrong but it is abysmal. Because of this, many people feel that Montgomery County is no longer home to them and they are being displaced trying to find somewhere to raise a family. They're right because without this, Montgomery County has become the playground of landlords and developers, who while charging these outrageous rent increases, leave their properties not up to code and in disrepair to the point that these places should be rendered uninhabitable. The three percent cap, was developed by both community members and some members of the council which is important to note because as activist and renter Harold Hill eloquently stated that "with 3% CPI, what the community is stating is that they can handle, but anymore than that, CPI might as well mean Can't Pay It." It is unacceptable that while some councilmembers are trying to give Montgomery County a helping hand, there are others who while talking about equity, have introduced and supported alternative legislation that will allow landlords to cap rent increase of up to 15%. That is unethical but it reeks of hypocrisy. Studies have shown time and time again that rent stabilization/rent control not only helps the economy but it helps our children who can focus on getting the best education they can get.

While this is a necessary first step, we must go further and think boldly. What this pandemic has shown us is that we must take great leaps forward. Montgomery County in addition to passing this bill, must not only invest in the development of community land trusts and housing cooperatives and other homeownership programs, but also must develop legislation

that bans Wall Street from purchasing residential properties and making rentals as well as legislation that mandates that any landlord that not only owns an excess of a certain amount of property must pay a tax and if they leave their rentals in a continued state of disrepair, they forfeit those homes and they must be transferred to the people so they can actually become homes.

Thank you.