

## Testimony of Scott Schneider, Progressive Neighbors

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Scott Schneider. I am testifying on behalf of Progressive Neighbors, a local organization dedicated to electing more progressives to local office, of which I am currently chair of the steering committee.

I have lived in Montgomery County for almost 40 years. I was a renter in various locations and cities for about 13 years until we bought our house in Silver Spring in 1986. Both of our daughters are currently renters. During the past year I have worked with IMPACT Silver Spring distributing food to local residents at the Clifton Park Baptist Church in Long Branch and teaching English Classes online to new immigrants. We also live in Long Branch and know families who live in apartment buildings like the Flower Branch apartments where families sometimes live two or three families in one apartment because they can't afford the rent. With the Purple line coming through our neighborhood in a few years, we expect rents to increase substantially causing more economic hardship for these families.

Landlords should be able to make a fair return on their investment but jacking up the rent 10, 15% goes above and beyond a fair return. It will only result in more displacement with families moving farther away to Prince George's County resulting in longer commutes and more traffic. We understand that the sponsors of the so-called "anti-rent gouging bill" believe such profits are necessary to attract developers to build more housing. However, they have not been building much affordable housing these past several years without rent stabilization when interest rates were near zero. The sponsors of this bill believe the "invisible hand of the free market" will produce affordable rate housing through the trickle-down effect (where lower rent apartments are vacated as the rich move up to newer places). But these lower rent buildings will be razed to make room for newer "luxury" apartments with only 12-15% set aside for MPDUs and none for deeply affordable units for the tens of thousands in the county on waiting lists. In addition, each year we lose more affordable units than can be built.

We have a crisis here for low income residents who are paying 50% or more of their income in rent. Renters make up about 40% of all Montgomery County residents and they are predominately residents of color and new immigrants. We have to do something to stop the bleeding. This is why we support the HOME Act and oppose the "anti-rent gouging" bill. The "anti-rent gouging" bill is not the solution and will exacerbate the problem, allowing landlords to raise rents 12-15%

this year. We urge you to support the HOME Act and deliver real relief to low income families in the County. Thank you.