

Evelyn Hoey

Affordable Housing Statement

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Greetings, Montgomery County Council President Evan Glass, Vice-President Andrew Friedson, esteem Council members and distinguish guests.

What is affordable housing and how does it affect the under-privileged in our communities? Affordable housing is housing we can afford to pay monthly on time without incurring late fees, feeling stressed, depressed, and strained that can create housing insecurities, for us, along with other insecurities we already face. For example, deciding how much to pay on a monthly utility bill, which needed medications to purchase, along with food.

My name is Evelyn Hoey. I have lived in Montgomery County, Maryland for 21 years, currently residing in Germantown, District 2. I am a participant in the Community Action Institute (CAI) program. I am here to advocate and ask the Montgomery County Council to allocate additional fundings in the 2024 budget and beyond for more affordable housing and to implement a rent control and rent stabilization program throughout Montgomery County.

Over the years, I have found it to be incredibly challenging to maintain monthly expenses, including paying yearly inflated rent increases, especially when my income is not comparable to the cost of living in Montgomery County, Maryland. In the past as a renter, unfortunately, I have had to seek the assistance of Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services and I was humiliated by one of the department's social service assistants.

When speaking with the assistant, I informed her that I was unemployed due to the company downsizing and having moved the entire accounting department to one of its field offices, namely North Carolina. The assistant informed me that to qualify for rent assistance, I would have to show proof that I had a "workable plan" for how I would pay rent and other expenses moving forward. Also, she asked if I had received an eviction notice from the rental office. I, in turn, told her that, now, it was hard to think about moving forward when I was currently in a crisis financially due to recent unemployment. I further informed her that I had not received an eviction notice and I would like to keep that from happening.

Unfortunately, the "workable plan" and "eviction notice" were the basis of anyone who was having financial difficulties to given rent assistance. Furthermore, she began to humiliate me by stating, "why do you want to live by yourself; you can't afford, get a roommate." That was the last time I went to social services. Before that incident, I had been to social services twice before and the atmosphere was rigid; however, I felt that last time, I was not going to accept that type of behavior. I left the social services office visibly upset, feeling degraded. I contacted one of the county offices, left a message, received a return call, and received the

assistance that I needed. The Department of Health and Human Services should be able to assist anyone that comes in there for assistance, regardless of your current or past income. Let us face it, most of us are all one paycheck away from needing help or becoming homeless.

I am asking the County Council to investigate getting The Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) to move a little faster in getting people housing. I know someone and have heard of other people who had been on the HOC waiting list for 8 to 10 years before they got housing. This would be unacceptable. There are so many people that need housing, affordable housing and fast.

There is the Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDU) program. You can rent an apartment or buy a house under this program. We need to get more programs like this throughout the county and with rent control and rent stabilization. I work hard and other residents of Montgomery County are hard workers as well.

I am in support of Bill 16-23 Rent Stabilization (The HOME Act). Under this bill, the maximum allowance for rent increase is up to 3%. This can assist residents in Montgomery County without having to worry about yearly inflated rental increases. In 2021, according to the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS), the median gross rent in Montgomery County was about \$1,821.00. There are renters in the county that are paying more than 50% of their monthly take home pay for rent and that is a rent burden. At one point, I was paying more than 50% of my monthly take home pay for rent. With the continued rising costs of rent in Montgomery County, it can be a deterrent for people moving into the County and forcing current residents to seek housing in other areas outside of Montgomery County.

Again, I am asking the Council to ensure that fundings is allocated in the 2024 budget and beyond for more affordable housing in Montgomery County to include rent control and rent stabilization.

Thank you for your time and attention to this serious matter.