

Dear Esteemed Members of the Montgomery County Council,

I pen this letter as a devoted member of the Montgomery County community and as a tenant who has found resilience and financial stability through hosting on Airbnb for the past two years. My purpose for writing today is to voice my profound concerns about Regulatory Bill 22-23 and Zoning Bill ZTA 23-04. These proposed regulations aim to prohibit tenants like myself from continuing our hosting endeavors, a lifeline that has bolstered our income and brought a sense of community to our beloved county.

The proposed regulations, I fear, are not just a threat to the financial well-being of the common residents of Montgomery County, but they also stand in stark contradiction to the principles embodied by the Economic Development Grant and Loan Program, and the Tourism Development Fund.

Hosting on Airbnb represents a form of micro-entrepreneurship, a small business venture that has been a vital source of income for many of us. This practice has enabled us to offset the high cost of living in Montgomery County and maintain our residence in a county we hold dear to our hearts. To outlaw this entrepreneurial endeavor would be an affront to the spirit of the Economic Development Grant and Loan Program, which seeks to stimulate business growth and foster economic resilience among residents.

Furthermore, the proposed bills risk compromising the vibrant diversity and dynamism of our county. Airbnb hosts not only provide affordable accommodation options for visitors but also promote cultural exchange and tourism, a sector that the Tourism Development Fund aims to bolster. Hosting on Airbnb is therefore an integral part of our county's tourism landscape, contributing to its richness and appeal.

Now, allow me to address a concerning aspect of these proposed regulations. The passage of Regulatory Bill 22-23 and Zoning Bill ZTA 23-04 threatens to shift the balance of power and profit away from the ordinary residents and towards hotels and opportunistic investors. The former, with their higher room rates, stand to gain from the reduction in affordable accommodation options. The latter could take advantage of the precarious financial positions of property owners who relied on the income from hosting. This is not the path towards a fair and equitable Montgomery County.

Our council is indeed at a pivotal juncture. We must choose between upholding the spirit of the Economic Development Grant and Loan Program and the Tourism Development Fund by rejecting these bills and thus protecting tenants' rights to host and contribute to the local economy. Alternatively, we can pass these bills, but then we must also question the relevance of these grants. It would be inconsistent to promote business and tourism development while simultaneously limiting the opportunities for such growth.

In closing, I urge you to consider the wider implications of Regulatory Bill 22-23 and Zoning Bill ZTA 23-04. These bills, if passed, would not only undermine the economic stability of numerous tenants, but they would also serve the interests of hotels and investors at the expense of the common residents. Let us choose a path that supports entrepreneurship, nurtures community growth, and truly aligns with the vision of our grants.

I appreciate your time and consideration. I trust in your commitment to our community and am confident that you will make a decision that best serves the interests of all residents of Montgomery County.

Daniel Iwu