

February 14, 2024

Testimony to the Montgomery County Council

Re: ZTA 24-01, Household Living – Civic and Institutional Uses

Dear Council Members,

The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County (LWVMC) takes this opportunity to express its **support for ZTA 24-01, Household Living – Civic and Institutional Uses, also known as Facilitating Affordable Inclusive Transformational Housing (FAITH)**. LWVMC supports comprehensive efforts to maintain and increase the supply of affordable housing through many mechanisms, including changes in zoning ordinances and flexible approaches. This legislation would do just that, by opening the door for increased housing that is more affordable for moderate- and lower-income families and individuals. This ZTA frees up land which is underutilized by both religiously affiliated organizations and private educational institutions for development of multi-unit and town house dwellings.

Montgomery County has an affordability problem, and it starts with housing:

- Per the [2020 Montgomery County Housing Needs Assessment](#), since 2010 about half of all new households earn less than \$50,000 annually. Ten years ago, the County was short more than 26,000 units for households earning up to 50% of the area medium income (A.M.I). Four years later, that gap had accelerated up to 65% of the A.M.I. households. Meanwhile, households in higher income ranges experienced an increase in available housing units.
- For the rental market, today's [median rent](#) for a 3-bedroom house in Montgomery County is \$2,729 per month for a family of four, or \$32,748 per year. This is equivalent to almost [half of the income](#) of those families who earn 50% of AMI (\$73,350 per year). That is unsustainable and makes it increasingly difficult for families to build financial security.

Rising rents and home prices, increasing interest rates, stagnant wages, and aging homes have fostered a two-class system in our county: People with generational wealth and an income greater than the AMI, and people without. Those least able to financially cope continue to bear the burden of limited affordable housing. When administered wisely and with proper oversight, creative measures such as ZTA 24-01 provide necessary opportunities to improve the county's overall livability down the line. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on legislation which will impact all residents.

Susan Albertine, President