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TESTIMONY – ZTA 25-02

IN FAVOR WITH AMENDMENTS

March 11, 2025

Good afternoon and thank you, President Stewart, Vice President Jawando and members of the Council.

I am Maryann Dillon, residing at 10002 Parkwood Drive in Bethesda, and I am here to speak IN SUPPORT of Zoning Text Amendment 25-02. I am a retired affordable housing professional and I am passionate about making Montgomery County accessible and affordable to all who live and work here.

My family is one of the lucky ones in Montgomery County, living in a single family home, walking distance to Metro and in the Walter Johnson High School cluster. We moved here 22 years ago, and clearly could never afford to move in today, as so many of the modest 1950s homes have been replaced by huge single family houses selling for up to \$2 million. Those homes easily could accommodate 4 households given their size.

Such single zoned neighborhoods like mine can no longer be justified, not from moral, equitable, or environmental perspectives. The vast majority of the County's developable land is zoned for single family. We simply can't afford to continue this low density pattern of development that forces families to live further and further away from the urban core, from jobs and Metro.

The ZTA 25-2 strikes me as a very workable compromise from the Attainable Housing Strategy, in which duplexes, triplexes, townhouses and small apartment buildings can be allowed along high traffic corridors throughout the County. Many of these corridors are no longer attractive for single family homes, given the volume of traffic generated. So a slightly higher density use seems very appropriate.

Montgomery County has fallen way behind in housing production necessary to sustain population growth. Our county is growing because it's a desirable place to live, with plenty of employment opportunities. This legislation will be a modest step toward encouraging more housing production county-wide. If we want to protect our open spaces, higher density housing in already developed areas has got to be a big part of the solution.

I want to focus on a few of the objections that we often hear raised about this zoning change:

ZTA 25-02 will not solve our housing crisis:

No, it will not solve it, but it is an important piece of the puzzle. We must try a wide range of solutions, and changing density, even modestly, will make a difference in the long run.

I don't want to lose the suburban character of my neighborhood:

This proposal will allow, not require, slightly higher density along select major residential corridors, many of which are no longer appropriate for single family housing. These changes will not come overnight, but can make a positive difference over, say a 50-year horizon.

Our schools are already overcrowded:

The modest nature of this zoning change means there will not be any dramatic changes to school-age population in any given cluster. Also, small multifamily buildings mean smaller apartments not suitable for larger families.

Then, this is too small a proposal to make a difference:

I agree, I'd like to see us doing more, but this legislation encourages more workforce housing production, and would be a great test case for providing new opportunities for the majority of our residents who can no longer afford a single family home.

In closing, I urge County Council to pass this common-sense legislation.

I suggest the following 2 amendment:

- Increase the 40' height limit where appropriate, on sites not adjacent to single family homes
- Allow more flexibility in setback requirements for sites appropriate for a small multifamily development

Thanks for your consideration.