

## Testimony for Oral Delivery

Thank you, President Stewart, Vice President Jawando and members of the Council for receiving my testimony tonight in support of the More Housing NOW legislative package with the expedited permitting provisions contained in ZTA 25-03. I am Rob Nooter, and I live in Councilmember Friedson's district. I am a member of the River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation, active in the social justice group Action in Montgomery (AIM) and in my homeowners' association.

My family is a living example of the demographics surrounding the housing crisis.

- My wife and I own a house worth about the median price of homes in the County.
- Our two young-adult sons have early-stage career jobs. They had both moved out of our house about 7 years ago but returned to live with us during the pandemic.
- One of them moved to an apartment in Rockville with two roommates a few months ago. The other hasn't found affordable or suitable housing and remains our roommate.
- Last year, our daughter returned from working as a schoolteacher overseas and relocated to Charlottesville, VA, partly due to the housing situation here.

So, the housing issues are real and tangible for us.

To define the problem: Montgomery County's housing deficit is 31,000 units with prices that have gone up accordingly. The number of single-family homes permitted for construction in the **last ten years** is 13,000 – less than half of what is needed to close this gap.

When people can't find housing and choose to live elsewhere, they sink roots and we lose them permanently. The outflow of young adults from Maryland last year alone is estimated to be 40,000.

Consider these questions:

- Where do we expect our schoolteachers, public service and safety workers, retail personnel, construction workers, restaurant staff and other members of the middle class workforce to live within this county?
- Or do we want to compel them to live elsewhere and endure lengthy and expensive commutes?
- Do we want to turn our back on the taxes that these workers would pay to the county if they were able to remain here as residents?

**The More Housing NOW bill provides a good starting point in solving the problem.** These first steps are necessary, but not sufficient to get the job done.

Amendments or alterations that would strengthen the bill are:

1. **Extending the expedited permitting process for conversion beyond the limited transport corridors included in the bill.**
2. Increasing the **targeting of housing assistance subsidies to favor many of the historically disadvantaged and underserved communities** within the county.
3. **Increase the percentage of workforce housing requirement** from the current level of 15%.
4. **Lowering the upper bound of the income limitation that defines what qualifies as workforce housing.** The current level of 120% of AMI (which is around \$185,000) is too high to correspond to a housing cost that is realistic for the middle-income workforce population.

Thank you. I hope that you pass the More Housing NOW legislative package as an important first step in addressing our severe housing shortfall, and I thank Councilmembers Friedson and Fani-Gonzalez for sponsoring it.