

March 17, 2025

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TESTIMONY Bill 5-25- FAVORABLE
Demolition Tax for Affordable Housing Production

TO: Montgomery County Council

My name is Carol Stern and I am a resident of Chevy Chase in District 1 and a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda. I am providing this testimony in support of Bill 5-25.

My Jewish law, halakah, includes the rights of the poor to housing and it specifically defines housing as one of the obligatory types of tzedakah or charity. The Bible commands that a poor person be granted "sufficient for what lacks, according to what is lacking to him. " One talmudic text understands each phrase in that command as referring to a specific type of assistance one might grant a poor person: "Sufficient for what he lacks"—this is a house. "What is lacking—this is a bed and table."

Bill 5-25, Demolition Tax for Affordable Housing Production is exactly in line with Jewish tradition. This bill would establish an excise tax on demolitions of single-family homes in order to generate funds for the Montgomery County Housing Initiative (HIF) for the production of affordable housing. It is estimated that this could bring in 4 million dollars annually. Montgomery County is desperately in need of additional affordable housing so our teachers, police, fireman and other county employees can live in the county where they work. **Every person, regardless of race or income, should have a safe, stable affordable home.**

This demolition tax is the same one used successfully in Evanston, IL and it has NOT acted as a deterrent in Evanston or anywhere else.

I respectfully urge the Council to return a favorable report on Bill 5-25.