

## GND Testimony

My name is Bezawit Gessesse and I'm a current Ethiopian-American from Silver Spring. I'm a member of Montgomery County's Green New Deal, an organization where students advocate for environmental and community issues, such as the housing crisis, in the county.

I'm writing to urge Montgomery County to prioritize housing justice in the budget by allocating the funding needed to help our county's most vulnerable residents. I'm here in support of Housing Justice Montgomery's demands.

I want the county to allocate \$50 million to ensure all 4,723 households that asked for rental assistance receive an average grant of \$10,581. I'm also requesting that \$9,475,427 be given to cover the costs of sheltering and housing of an estimated 642 current clients and 200 new clients in 2026, so that there is enough to fund everyone's exit out of homelessness. These funds aren't just random, abstract numbers. Every dollar represents a real person. Real people in my neighborhood, my school, contributors to the life of our county. When we fund these programs, we aren't only providing temporary relief but taking the steps toward long-term stability.

I see the effects of housing instability everywhere, in my classmates, in my neighbors who've been coming and disappearing overnight due to eviction, in the shelters that are overcrowded and understaffed to be able to help everyone they want. I've seen how difficult it is for working families, immigrants, and young people to find stable, affordable housing—even while tirelessly working and contributing to the community. It's heartbreaking to see the families I've known for years be pushed out of their homes, simply because rent rose faster than their paychecks.

Respectfully, I ask the Council to vote in favor of allocating \$50 million for rental assistance and \$9,475,427 to cover sheltering. We have the resources, all we need now is the will to invest in the people of our county. Thank you.