



Date: March 6, 2026

To: Montgomery County Council

From: Housing Justice Montgomery

Subject: SUPPORT for Bill 9-26, Rental Housing – Maintenance Standards and Essential Services – Air Conditioning

Dear **Council President and Members** of the Montgomery County Council,

Thank you for all the work that you do to better Montgomery County. On behalf of the members of Housing Justice Montgomery, we are writing to urge you to vote in favor of **Bill 9-26, Rental Housing – Maintenance Standards and Essential Services – Air Conditioning** introduced on February 10, 2026 by Councilmember Mink and co-sponsored by Councilmember-At-Large Jawando and Councilmember-At-Large Shebra Evans.

Housing Justice Montgomery is a coalition led by residents experiencing housing challenges who are working together to improve housing affordability, safety, and overall living conditions across Montgomery County. Many of our members are renters living in older apartment buildings where indoor temperatures during the summer can become dangerously high.

Bill 9-26 is an important step toward protecting the health and safety of tenants. Air conditioning is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity, especially as our region experiences increasingly intense heat waves. **How Bill 9-26 Supports Our Members:**

- **Protecting Health and Safety:** Air conditioning is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity, especially as our region experiences increasingly intense heat waves. Many of our members live in older buildings where cooling systems are either non-existent or frequently broken. Bill 9-26 ensures that cooling is treated with the same urgency as heating, protecting vulnerable residents like seniors, children or individuals with disabilities or underlying health conditions from heat exhaustion and respiratory distress.
- **Preventing Financial Displacement:** Without mandated standards, tenants are often forced to choose between purchasing expensive, inefficient portable units or suffering in dangerous temperatures. By requiring landlords to maintain these systems, the bill prevents the "hidden costs" of housing from pushing families to the brink of eviction.

- **Ensuring Dignity in Affordable Housing:** Safe housing must include protection from the elements. This bill closes a gap in our current code, ensuring that "affordable" housing does not mean "substandard" housing. It empowers our members to hold landlords accountable when essential cooling services are neglected.
- **Clear Standards for Accountability:** Our members often face "landlord neglect" where repairs are delayed indefinitely. By establishing AC as an **essential service**, this bill provides the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) with the clear authority needed to enforce repairs quickly.

Establishing clear maintenance standards for air conditioning will help ensure that rental housing remains safe and habitable during the hottest months of the year. This bill will also provide tenants with clearer expectations and accountability when essential services fail.

For our members, this legislation means safer homes, fewer health risks, and greater stability during the summer months. No resident in Montgomery County should have to choose between staying in dangerously hot conditions or leaving their home.

We respectfully urge the Council to support and pass Bill 9-26.

Thank you for your continued commitment to protect the well-being of Montgomery County residents.

Sincerely,
Members of Housing Justice Montgomery

CASA
Democratic Socialists of America (Montgomery County)
Housing Justice Montgomery
Jews United for Justice
Shepherd's Table
Progressive Maryland
Everyday Canvassing
Enclave Tenant Association



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