

**Testimony in Support of Bill 52-20:
Landlord-Tenant Relations—Protection Against Rent Gouging Near Transit
February 11, 2021**

This testimony is submitted in support of **Bill 52-20, Landlord-Tenant Relations — Protection Against Rent Gouging Near Transit**, by Deedee Jacobsohn, a resident of District 1, on behalf of Jews United for Justice. JUFJ draws on the Jewish tradition of a commitment to justice to campaign to improve the lives of people in Montgomery County. We thank Councilmember Jawando for introducing this bill, which would help protect and preserve affordable rental housing where it is greatly needed — near transit stations.

In the Book of Leviticus it says, “I will grant peace to the land.” The Rabbis say that the blessing of peace is a reminder that “regardless of how much food and drink a person has, if he is not blessed with peace and security, the other blessings are of little value.” There are many ways to interpret “peace and security,” but in Montgomery County today it is clear that there can be no peace without racial equity and there can be no security without adequate, stable, affordable housing.

As we assess the impact of Bill 52-20, we look to the Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) impact statement from the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO), which confirms that the county has been experiencing an alarming loss of low-rent units near the Bethesda Metro station and the planned Purple Line stations. Rental units near Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Purple Line stations typically house lower-income renters, who most benefit from rent stabilization. Moreover, Black and Latinx households occupy more than half of the rental units near BRT and Purple Line stations, adding a significant racial equity component to this bill.

Housing stability brings peace of mind. With construction of affordable housing units lagging and low-rent units disappearing, there can be no peace of mind for lower income residents of Montgomery County.

We urge the members of the County Council to adopt the recommendations of the RESJ statement regarding Bill 52-20 to help provide housing stability for lower-income renters, particularly Black and Latinx households who live near BRT and the Purple Line.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this crucial legislation.