



COUNTY COUNCIL TESTIMONY ON BILL 30-21

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September 14, 2021

Position: FAVORABLE

My name is Kristin Mink, and I'm a lifelong resident of Montgomery County, a former Rockville renter, and a current candidate for the Montgomery County Council. Thank you for considering my testimony today.

I support Rent Stabilization Bill 30-21 to extend the limitation on rent increases and prevent the accrual of late fees during the pandemic recovery period.

Approximately 40% of Montgomery County residents live in rental housing. These community members are disproportionately people of color, and disproportionately more likely to have suffered the health effects of contracting COVID-19. These are families that are more likely to include essential workers, more likely to have had their income reduced during the pandemic, and more likely to have lost jobs entirely.

In April 2020, the Council voted unanimously to pass the COVID-19 Renter Relief Act. And today, the conditions that necessitated the passage of that measure *are still present*: We are still in a pandemic.

Bill 30-21 provides an extension to that 2020 bill. It extends the limitation on rent increases above the voluntary guidelines from 90 days to one year after the expiration of the public health emergency. Additionally, it prohibits charging late fees accrued during the emergency and for the year following, preventing extra charges from being piled onto renters' bills as they do their best to get to a point of stability. Thousands of our renters are already in arrears, and fewer than half of the applications for rent relief have been processed. We must give families an opportunity to receive the aid they've been promised, to financially recover.

There are landlords in Montgomery County currently providing month-to-month leases. Why? Because they're waiting for those 2020-enacted protections to expire so they can raise rents



beyond the voluntary guidelines. Without the extension provided by Bill 30-21, families that are already struggling including those awaiting rent relief will soon find themselves being pushed back underwater.

Court dockets are already packed with eviction cases, as the Delta variant continues to rage. Now is not the time to lift protections and push housing stability out of reach for even more families and children.

Governor Hogan has failed our community by neglecting to declare the obvious -- that we are in a public health emergency, and so it falls to our county leaders to step up and protect our residents.

I urge the Council to pass Rent Stabilization Bill 30-21.

I also urge the county to follow the lead of five other Maryland counties and partner with United Way to expedite rent relief payouts with the Strategic Targeted Eviction Prevention (S.T.E.P.) program. This program works with landlords to pay off multiple tenants' back rent in bulk, instead of individual tenants having to apply. Small landlords who are reliant on income from their renters to pay their own bills must also be provided resources and relief.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Housing is a human right, a public health issue, a public safety issue, and a moral issue. We must not leave renters behind as we recover from this pandemic as a community.