



## **Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony**

Expedited Bill 30-21: Landlord-Tenant Relations - Restrictions During Emergencies - Extended Limitations Against Rent Increases and Late Fees

September 14, 2021

As advocates for the low-income community, the Community Action Board (CAB) strongly supports Bill 30-21. The CAB supported the COVID-19 Renter Relief Act last year, which prohibited rent increases beyond the guidelines established by the County. Recognizing that renters continue to struggle in our community due to the impacts of COVID-19 and the longstanding lack of affordable housing, we believe that extending the protections already in place for an additional year is critical.

The lack of affordable housing in Montgomery County continues to be a critical issue for lower-income households. In 2019, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, about half of all renters in the County were “housing cost burdened”, spending more than 30% of their income on housing alone.<sup>1</sup> Our board has heard time and again from participants in our free advocacy training program for lower-income County residents, the Community Advocacy Institute, that obtaining affordable housing is a constant struggle. The HOC housing voucher waiting list remains long and many people struggle to navigate the application process for rental assistance.

One of our board members who represents the low-income community, recently shared her personal challenges during the pandemic. She continues to be unable to work due to the in-person nature of her job and is now behind on her rent. While she has applied for assistance, she is still struggling and is very concerned about what will happen now that the Maryland evictions moratorium has ended.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://hit.handhousing.org/jurisdictions/montgomery>

<sup>2</sup> <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Overview-of-National-Eviction-Moratorium.pdf>

This bill is critical to help ensure that households currently behind on their rent, most of whom are people of color, do not fall further behind.<sup>3</sup> Extending the restrictions on rent increases for an additional year following the public health emergency will help to prevent a surge in homelessness later on. The CAB applauds the County Council's ongoing efforts to address the needs of lower-income community members during the pandemic and beyond. We encourage you to pass this bill and we stand ready to support the Council in establishing additional policies and programs that will provide critical assistance and help more of our neighbors move towards self-sufficiency.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://nlihc.org/coronavirus-and-housing-homelessness/national-eviction-moratorium>