



Testimony on Montgomery County's FY 23 Operating Budget

April 20, 2022

Good afternoon, Council President Alborno and members of the Council. I am Diana Eisenstat, Executive Director of AHCMC, on whose behalf I testify today. AHCMC has advocated for decent, safe and affordable housing as a right, not a privilege for 31 years. We continue to convene legislators, developers, elected, appointed and other housing officials, and a myriad of housing partners and experts. The economic, health and housing challenges of this covid era serve as a clarion call to action and testament to just how critical the lack of available and affordable housing is for too many Montgomery County residents.

Greater than half of our residents remain cost burdened. Though the Congress passed the Fair Housing Act more than 5 decades ago, the home ownership inequity between white and African American families is 32%, and racial inequities persist across virtually every desired public sector metric. We still have a long way to go.

With that journey in mind, we are ecstatic about the nearly \$100 million total allocation for the preservation and development of affordable housing in the FY '23 budget. Still, we need to invest more than \$120 million a year to meet the Council of Governments' 2030 housing target that we have embraced.

We know that living safely and affordably housed is essential to our health and well-being and our ability to succeed and be productive at work and in school. It's the foundation we aspire to provide all residents, and especially our children. In this era of unexpected revenue and state surplus funds, AHCMC encourages the County Council to consider an even greater investment in affordable housing in FY 23. Affordable housing is always a good investment. Now more than ever, in conjunction with effective land use policy, we need to accelerate this investment to meet the need and level the playing field for all. We know it will pay great dividends for our community.

Thank you for your stewardship and for the opportunity to provide comments today.