

Don Mewha  
Kemp Mill, MD

**Testimony in Support of Bill 22-22  
Landlord-Tenant Relations – Limitations on Rent Increases**

My name is Don Mewha, I live in the new District 6 of Montgomery County in Kemp Mill, and I'm asking the Council to support Bill 22-22, which would limit rent increases in Montgomery County to 4.4% for six months.

I'm the Chief Technology Officer for a Behavioral Health practice located here in Montgomery County, and the proud parent of four children and the guardian for my nephew, each of whom have attended or are attending Montgomery County Public Schools. I moved to Montgomery County from Philadelphia back in 2003 because of the opportunities that the county offered: better schools for my kids, better jobs for me and my wife, and a more vibrant and diverse community for us to be a part of.

In the time that we've lived here, we've had one goal: home ownership. We have attempted to save money toward that goal through good times and bad. I've been laid off three times, my wife has been laid off twice, but we've always made it through, and we've never talked about looking anywhere but here for our first home purchase.

That's no longer the case.

In 2020, we moved from an apartment in the Aspen Hill area where we paid just under \$2000 per month in rent to a house in Kemp Mill, where our rent was nearly \$2900 per month. It was a steep increase, but given everything that was going on, we decided it was worth living with a bit less of a cushion if it provided an opportunity to be more comfortable. Two years later, our rent has now increased to nearly \$3100 per month.

\$31000 per month.

To rent.

We looked for less expensive options. I would hate to move again, but I have serious concerns about being able to make these rent payments. The horrifying truth is that they were in line with other prices in the county, if not on the low end for a 4 bedroom home.

I don't know how anyone can be expected to be able to make headway toward home ownership with that sort of burden, especially when you add in the increased cost associated with everything else from health care, to gas, to food into the mix. Two of our children are in college at the moment, just beginning to take their first steps as adults. They're the sort of people that would previously have been attracted to live in MoCo: Young, educated, professionals who either

have or are pursuing advanced degrees. Up until recently, both of them had intended to live in Montgomery County when they graduated. One of them wants to teach here.

That changed when they started looking into what housing would cost.

The oppressively high rents that are being charged in the county are an impassable barrier for people looking to purchase their first home, or even rent their first apartment in the county.

I completely understand my privilege in this situation. My position and salary afford my wife and I the ability to absorb financial hardship that many less fortunate residents don't have, which is why I have to stress that if this is happening to someone in my position, I can only imagine the impact it's having on people in a far more vulnerable economic space.

People need help, and they need it now. The long-term solutions to our County's crisis deserve significant thought and an all-hands on deck approach. And in the meantime, I ask the Council to pass Bill 22-22 to temporarily cap the rent at 4.4%, so that renters like myself — and the many more who are even more vulnerable to economic precarity — can stay housed during this ongoing crisis. Thank you.