

Howdy County Council!

My name is Tino Fragale, and I'm the Co-Director at Everyday Canvassing-- a Montgomery County-based nonprofit dedicated to equitable outreach, community ownership in our government decision-making, and public resource distribution through canvassing.

I brought a prop for y'all today. On your desk, I've placed the list of county residents who are in the process of being evicted because they have past-due rent and have their court date tomorrow. Every Wednesday that I canvass to share resources at court, I receive a packet like this with different evictions..

I'd like you all to take a moment to study the list while I talk. Maybe look at the properties where most people are being evicted from. Or ask yourself:

How many people are going through eviction on just an ordinary Wednesday morning?

What about Wednesday afternoon?

How many people combined on Wednesday morning and afternoon?

There are 630 of our Montgomery County neighbors between morning and afternoon going through the process of eviction on an ordinary Wednesday.

CONTENT WARNING: I am about to talk suicide

To be clear, not all of these people will be evicted. But certainly all of them are experiencing one of the most emotionally and financially stressful times of their lives. At the very least, nearly all of them will experience struggles renting a new apartment due to damaged rental and credit history.

At the worst, some of our evicted neighbors will die from a DMV summer or winter without shelter. And as a February 2024 CDC study just found,

“Those who had lost their legal right to their dwellings and for whom the landlord had applied for the eviction to be executed were approximately **four times** more likely to commit suicide than those

who had not been exposed to this experience, controlling for several demographic, socioeconomic and mental health conditions prior to the date of the judicial decision¹.”

You might be thinking; Tino, what does this have to do with this year’s budget?

There is a budget line item for \$22.6 million dedicated to fund the Rental Assistance Program (also known as RAP). This program provides a one-year reduction for future rent of up to \$600 per month for renters with a household member over 62 or with disabilities. R.A.P. is a helpful program. But this program does not help renters who continue to experience job loss, illness, or family crises who will need help paying rent they already owe.

There is one thing I am asking of you today. **Please move at least \$30 million from non rent-related budget line items towards helping our community pay off the rent they already owe.**

_____ Verbal Testimony Ends Here _____

Every Wednesday, for dozens of Wednesdays in a row, we’ve had hundreds--some Wednesdays, even thousands, of our friends and family going through eviction. A couple of good friends of mine, Laurie and Nancy, ended up on the street recently. We really need your help.

At Everyday Canvassing, we’ve knocked over 60,000 Montgomery County renter doors in the last few years. If there is one thing we are sure of it’s that our neighbors are not ready for you to pull support for back-rent today. This Wednesday, there are over 600 of our neighbors whose home, safety, and health are depending on you.

Please move at least \$30 million from non rent-related budget line items towards helping our community pay off the rent they already owe.

Appreciate you,
Tino

¹ Study link: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/su/su7302a2.htm>