

Good evening, I am Edson Soto. I am a security professional living in Gaithersburg with my family. I want to talk about some of the housing conditions in Montgomery County.

Where we previously lived in Rockville we experienced the housing crisis firsthand. Mold grew freely in our building. Sewage water seeped from our toilet at every flush. Then came the roaches, and worst of all the bed bugs. Imagine waking up every morning not just scratching at dozens of new bites, but running over to find your kids covered in them too.

We talked management. We documented the problems and submitted complaints. But despite paying thousands in rent, they did almost nothing. The mold was not removed. The toilet went unfixed. The treatments did little to stop the bugs. At best we would get a short break, only to have the bites soon return.

To make everything worse I also lost my job and we began to fall behind on the rent. We couldn't stay in a place that was harming our health. Yet now how could we leave with the unpaid rent on our record? But, you know, God works in mysterious ways. Just when things were getting really bad He sent Tino with Housing Justice Montgomery to my door.

They were able to connect me with rent relief services through the county. The rent relief paid down a portion of the back rent, and when I found a new a job I was able to pay the rest. With this we found a landlord who understood our situation, and have been living without assistance since.

I wanted to share this story because I think people need to know how important these programs can be in times of need. They make the difference between misery and renewal for our families. We have to fund and expand these programs. And if we need to save money to do it, let's make the landlords putting our health in danger pay the price.

Thank you and good evening.