



Housing Initiative Partnership



MORE MONTGOMERY COUNTY RACIAL EQUITY NETWORK



JEW'S UNITED FOR JUSTICE



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville Social Justice Committee



Monday, July 8th, 2024

Mayor Ashton and City Councilmembers
City of Rockville
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mayor Ashton and Members of the Rockville City Council,

We, the undersigned, represent dozens of organizations and thousands of individuals and families who live and work in Rockville. We write to you today to advocate for the urgent need for rent stabilization in our city. As organizations deeply embedded in the fabric of our community, we witness firsthand the severe housing instability and unpredictability faced by many of our Rockville members and residents.

We stand united in urging the Mayor and Council to pass legislation capping annual rent increases. This measure is crucial to ensuring that all Rockville residents have access to affordable, stable, and predictable housing.

We thank Councilmembers Izola Shaw and David Myles for advancing rent stabilization by scheduling a discussion on July 8.

Housing (shelter) is an essential need, akin to food and water. The greatest asset of any community is its people – their health, prosperity, and quality of life are fundamental measures of community sustainability. Yet, it is evident that local governments across our region, including Rockville, are struggling to meet the housing needs of all residents. The current housing situation in Rockville is becoming untenable for many of our community members, who are predominantly immigrants, Black and Brown, seniors, and working-class families.

Approximately half of Rockville’s population are renters¹ and more than half of these renters are cost-burdened, spending over one-third of their income on rent². Additionally, about thirty percent of Rockville homeowners are cost-burdened³. A single unforeseen life event or an unreasonable rent increase can lead to displacement, disrupting lives and uprooting families. Rent stabilization is essential to protect these indispensable community members, ensuring they can continue to live and work in Rockville without the constant threat of losing their homes.

While building new housing is vital, it’s not a quick fix. Permitting and construction can take years, and Rockville renters cannot afford to wait, as a majority of them struggle to pay next month’s rent and fear being displaced by their next unknown lease renewal. As we simultaneously support the various Rockville programs aimed at keeping housing affordable and curbing evictions, none of these efforts offer the immediate, widespread, sustainable impact that reaches tens of thousands of city residents, like rent stabilization.

Additionally, rent stabilization provides critical stability to some of our most vulnerable populations, particularly children and seniors. For school-age children, frequent relocations due to unaffordable rent can cause significant disruptions to their education and academic progress, leading to long-term negative effects on their development and future success⁴. For seniors, rent stabilization enables them to age in place, which is essential to maintain their health, well-being, and access to necessary services and community support - vital to their quality of life.

Rent stabilization is crucial for individuals with disabilities due to its multifaceted impact on their socioeconomic stability and quality of life. It mitigates the vulnerability stemming from fixed incomes, preserves investments in home adaptations, and maintains access to vital support networks. Moreover, it safeguards against displacement in a market where accessible housing is often scarce, thus reducing the risk of homelessness and its associated health ramifications. Ultimately, rent stabilization serves as a critical mechanism for promoting housing security and social equity for this often marginalized demographic.

In closing, we urge you to pass rent stabilization to provide immediate and sustainable relief to Rockville residents. By doing so, you will protect our essential workers, support vulnerable populations such as children and seniors, and uphold your public commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion⁵. The health and stability of our community depend on your leadership

¹ Census Reporter, Rockville MD Profile (Retrieved from U.S. Census Bureau (2022), American Community Survey 1-year estimates Profile page for Rockville, MD)

² U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2022, Rockville, MD

³ Ibid.

⁴ Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight. 2023. Rent Regulations and the Montgomery County Rental Housing Market. June 13. P13-14

⁵ The City of Rockville, Resolution 10-21: To endorse and commit to the establishment of government policies and practices that promote racial and ethnic equity and social justice

ensuring that all Rockville residents have access to affordable, stable, and predictable housing. We stand ready to support you in this vital endeavor and await your prompt action.

Sincerely,

CASA

Housing Initiative Partnership

Everyday Canvassing

Montgomery County Racial Equity (MORE) Network

Muslim Voices Coalition

Progressive Maryland

Jews United for Justice

SEIU Local 500

Our Revolution Montgomery County

350 MoCo

Montgomery County DSA

Montgomery Young Democrats

Maryland Poor People's Campaign

Progressive Neighbors

Shepherd's Table

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville Social Justice Committee

Young People for Progress

Housing Justice Montgomery

Trans Maryland

Moco Green New Deal Interns

Renters United Maryland