



Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

March 28, 2023


Dear Council President Glass and members of the Montgomery County Council:

My name is Dan Reed and I serve as the Regional Policy Director for [Greater Greater Washington](#), a nonprofit that works to advance racial, economic, and environmental justice in land use, transportation, and housing throughout Greater Washington. We believe that rent stabilization is an important, near-term solution to prevent displacement, but not an affordable housing solution on its own.

While both proposed rent stabilization bills in front of the council have merits, I am testifying today in support of Bill 15-23, Anti-Gouging Protections with amendments. Given its six co-sponsors to Bill 16-23's two co-sponsors, the council's choice is not between the two bills as much as it is between *a* rent stabilization policy in Montgomery County, and *no* rent stabilization policy in Montgomery County. We anticipate that this bill will be amended with a lower rent cap, which we fully support. It's worth noting that DC's rent cap is currently 2% plus CPI or 10%, whichever is higher.

The Urban Institute [identifies rent stabilization and/or control](#), among other tenant protections, as an effective anti-displacement measure. [Thirty-five percent of Montgomery County households rent their homes](#), and [51% of renters are already cost-burdened](#) (paying more than 30% of their monthly income on rent). [Rents in the DC area grew nearly 16 percent](#) between the first quarter of 2021 and the first quarter of 2022. Such large, dramatic rent increases can push residents out of their homes, out of their neighborhoods, and out of the county.

If rent stabilization gives tenants the choice to stay in their homes, increased housing production gives tenants the choice to find a new home if their needs or preferences change without having to leave the people and places that matter to them. In the long term, the county needs more income-restricted, subsidized homes, and market-rate homes: Per its own needs assessment, Montgomery County [has to provide at least 3,200 new homes each year](#) over the next 20 years to accommodate its growing population—nearly twice the 1,800 homes we approved in 2021. [Another](#)

The Washington, DC region is great  and it can be greater.



[Urban Institute study](#) notes that allowing more homes on any given piece of land can prevent rent increases while creating new housing options, particularly for middle-income residents. Like rent stabilization, housing production alone is not an affordable housing solution.

Therefore, I urge the County Council to, upon approval of an amended bill, use its powers to:

- Increase rental assistance for tenants who have difficulty covering housing costs, regardless of rent increases.
- Expand the Opportunity Housing Development Fund, which provides revolving loans for mixed-income social housing developments in the county, the proceeds from which are then used to produce more housing.
- Increase support for first-time homebuyers such as down payment and closing-cost grants, similar to DC's Open Doors program, which provides up to \$202,000 in down payment assistance for qualified homebuyers.
- Remove parking requirements for new homes near Metro and Purple Line stations. Structured parking costs tens of thousands to build per space, increasing the cost of housing in areas that are already expensive and where people are less likely to drive. House Bill 819, which unanimously passed the Maryland House of Delegates this month, would eliminate parking requirements for new homes within a quarter-mile of Red and Purple Line stations.
- Upzone based on the Attainable Housing Strategies report, which is waiting for Planning Board approval. The report's draft recommendations are to allow up to three homes by-right on lots currently zoned for one house (R-40, R-60, R-90, and R-200); four homes on lots closer to transit; and a new optional method of development to encourage construction of duplexes, cottage courts, townhomes, and small apartment buildings near transit, along the Growth Corridors identified in Thrive 2050, and near activity centers.

This issue is personal for me. Like many people the County Council has heard from on this issue, I have been a tenant. In 2019, a 30% rent increase for my apartment in Rockville left me with no choice but to move. As an organization, GGWash wants to ensure that double digit rent increases are a thing of the past. However, neither Bill 15-23 or Bill 16-23 will relieve the burden of housing costs for all county residents. To do so, we look forward to working with the council to craft and implement the above policies. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dan Reed
Regional Policy Director
Greater Greater Washington