

From: Jessica Watkins (Jessica.Watkins@rainin.com)
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Testimony in support of HB1077, Relating to Real Property-Deletion of Unlawful Ownership Restrictions- Exemption from Fees and Surcharges.

Submitted to: Maryland House Environment and Transportation Committee

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee. My name is Jessica Watkins. I am on the board of Rodgers Forge Community Association, but I am speaking as a member of the community in support of HB1077. I was on the committee of neighbors who worked on striking the racist language from our covenants and it is a long, tedious process to dig through the land records of each property all the way back to where the covenants were filed. We were already tackling this project when Senate Bill 621 passed and made the process much easier because we no longer needed to approach every neighbor to get agreement, we could simply take a vote of our community association members. While the racist covenants are not enforceable, it was important to do because we don't want our neighbors of color to see such demoralizing language and wonder if they are truly welcome here. This process also gives an opportunity for white neighbors to acknowledge the legacy we live under and reflect on the racial wealth gap these kinds of covenants helped create. We can't undo the damage that has been done by these covenants, but it is our duty to dismantle structures of racism wherever we find them. I hope all other community associations and HOAs will formally say these attitudes are not tolerated any longer by taking the time and effort to strike this language. These kinds of covenants put neighborhoods at odds with the federal government. It's obvious we need to be facilitating this process, which is why I support this bill and any other bill that would remove barriers to this effort.

Thank You,

Jessica Watkins, Rodgers Forge Resident.

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