

Jaime Fenton, Ph.D.
346 Old Trail
Baltimore, MD 21212
443-602-6426

February 19, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing a letter in support of House Bill 1077. I would like to share a little about myself and my community in an effort to demonstrate the importance of this bill. I am a resident of Rodgers Forge, a community of 1500 rowhomes in Towson, as well as a mother, and psychologist. When I learned about the discriminatory language in my community's covenants in 2017 from a Baltimore Sun article, I was outraged. I pursued getting involved in the effort, experiencing this as a shameful mark on the community I love. I was appointed to the Rodgers Forge Community Association and quickly became the chair of the newly created committee. I work as a psychologist, and have little to no knowledge or expertise in legal or real estate matters, so I reached out to the community for help. The response I received was overwhelming-a large number of people reached out to me to share gratitude for working to change our covenants. Many people also reached out expressing an interest in helping. A majority of these residents were people like myself without experience but a desire to help and overcome this wrong. Our committee members worked tirelessly, going through the disorganized online land records, to find 85 covenants that covered 6 streets. Our team experienced stress to find the covenants in a short period so that we could submit them before the deadline of September 30, 2019. The time pressure that we experienced seems unnecessary. Any Maryland community should be able to change their covenants at any point in time if social justice is a value of our state legislature.

We obviously can't go back in time and change the fact that Maryland communities became the national model for housing discrimination at the neighborhood level in the early 1900's however the same neighborhoods can be a positive model for the rest of the country by changing all of covenants. This matter has received national attention as evidenced by the contact our community association received from individuals and journalists in other states. It is important to reduce the barriers for communities to make this happen in order to increase the likelihood that change will occur. Please support House Bill 1077 and eliminate deadlines for communities to remove discriminatory language from their covenants. Changing these covenants is more than a symbolic gesture-it's righting a wrong that was perpetuated against people of color and Jews. If it helps more families of multicultural backgrounds move into a neighborhood or feel more comfortable in their homes, it's worth the effort.

Sincerely,



Jaime Fenton, Ph.D.