



COMMUNITY ACTION BOARD
Testimony in Support of HB821
Montgomery County Stable Homes Act
Tuesday, March 10, 2020

TO: The Honorable Kumar Barve, Chair; The Honorable Dana Stein, Vice Chair; and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Laura E. Irwin, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County's anti-poverty group and the governing body for the Community Action Agency and Head Start, strongly supports HB821, which would require landlords to provide "just cause" prior to evicting a tenant. Expanding affordable housing and tenants' rights have been two of our board's historic priorities. We recognize that a large proportion of low-income County residents struggle to obtain housing that is affordable, accessible to public transportation, and adequate for them and their families. As noted in our agency's recent Community Needs Assessment, nearly half of County renters are housing burdened.¹ Procedures must be put in place to safeguard renters from unfair practices that may jeopardize their housing.

Ensuring tenants' rights is especially important in an expensive area like Montgomery County. The County's Self-Sufficiency Standard, which measures the true cost of living for a family of a certain size in a specific geographic area, is \$91,252 for a family of four with two adults, one preschooler and one school-age child – nearly three and a half times the Federal Poverty Level. This same family will need to spend an average of \$1,748 each month on housing alone.² With the cost of housing and other necessities so high in the County and affordable housing so limited, renters should not need to face the threat of eviction without adequate justification.

Our board applauds the recent efforts of our County Council to strengthen renters' rights through policies such as requiring landlords to maintain air conditioning and requiring landlords to pay relocation fees when rental properties are condemned. HB821 will continue these efforts by strengthening tenants' rights and implementing additional protections. We ask that you pass HB821 and continue to explore policies that will further protect renters and expand affordable housing options in the County.

¹ 2017 American Community Survey <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

² Montgomery County Self-Sufficiency Standard <http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/>

Department of Health and Human Services • Office of Community Affairs • Community Action Agency

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