



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony

County Council Bill 18-20 – Covid-19 Renter Relief Act

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

As advocates for the low-income community, the Community Action Board strongly supports Bill 18-20. In Montgomery County, where the Self-Sufficiency Standard for a family of four with two adults, one preschooler, and one school-age child is \$91,252 – nearly three and a half times the Federal Poverty Level – the current public health emergency has exacerbated so many of the challenges already facing our lower-income neighbors.¹ Many people who work in low-wage jobs without benefits are struggling to pay for basic necessities. Prosperity Now notes that 24.5% of County households do not have enough money readily available (liquid assets) to live at the Federal Poverty Level for just three months in the absence of income.² These community members are struggling the most right now and they are also the people who will benefit the most from the emergency assistance the Council has already allocated, something our Board greatly appreciates.

Bill 18-20 takes the important step of preventing rent increases during the Covid-19 emergency. With the cost of housing already so high in Montgomery County, the Community Action Board believes this step is an absolute necessity. Even before the current emergency, 44.7% of white renters, 42.7% of Asian renters, 54.5% of Black renters, and 62.2% of Latino renters were housing burdened.³ With unemployment hitting record levels, these shocking numbers are even higher right now during the emergency. As the governing body for Head Start in the County, it is important to note that this bill would support lower-income parents in particular who are struggling the most right now to cover their basic expenses. Furthermore, we know that many community members facing serious financial hardship right now are not eligible for

¹ Montgomery County Self-Sufficiency Standard <http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/>

² Prosperity Now <https://prosperitynow.org/>

³ Office of Legislative Oversight Racial Equity Profile Montgomery County
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2019%20Reports/RevisedOLO2019-7.pdf>

the IRS Economic Impact Payments, along with other emergency supports available to residents. It is unfeasible to expect these families to be able to contend with a rent increase during these uncertain times. Stabilizing rents until the Covid-19 emergency subsides is a critical step in the effort to support vulnerable residents at this difficult time. We encourage the Council to pass this bill and to continue to explore policies and programs that will provide necessary support to residents.