

Testimony: Housing for Jobs Act SB 0430 and HB 0503

By Kevin Bromberg, a Montgomery County resident

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

House Environmental and Transportation Committee

March 4, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

And Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I am writing to express my **strong opposition** to SB 0430 and HB 0503, also known as the Housing for Jobs Act. This bill is certainly misnamed because it will **NOT** bring housing to the people with jobs who need housing.

Disruption of Single-Family Zoning is Not Justified Nor Designed to Promote Affordable Housing

This proposed legislation would override the careful planning of single-family neighborhoods and is poorly designed to promote affordable housing. The arbitrary trigger of a housing-to-jobs ratio is unlikely to identify the degree or existence of any housing shortfall and fails to account for housing units already in the pipeline.

There is no reason to override our current single-family zoning and certainly no reason to abandon the long-established Master Plan procedures in Montgomery County. There are over 30,000 units in the pipeline of already established units that have not yet been built, which would account for the entire budget allocated to the County under the current bill.

In our neighborhood, we already have more expensive housing replacing affordable housing, and this bill does nothing to change that reality. The legislation would further enable developers to take down naturally affordable housing and substitute high-cost housing, as already happens frequently today. It appears that this bill would merely encourage the construction of more multifamily housing units for sale or rental at market prices, rather than workforce housing. At a minimum, this bill should be restricted to approval of units that cost \$400,000 or less.

Available Evidence Demonstrates that Upzoning Does Not Create Affordable Housing

Research by Michael Storper (UCLA) showed that there is no relationship between upzoning and housing costs; they do not go down. Rising housing costs are the result of other trends, not low-density housing. Upzoning principally benefits high-earning households, contributing to increasing income inequality.

Montgomery County's existing housing policy to provide affordable housing was praised in an August 25, 2023 article in the New York Times <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/25/business/affordable-housing-montgomerycounty.html?searchResultPosition=2>. It was also recently praised by NPR. The affordable housing feature is completely absent in the state legislation.

The experience of Minneapolis upending single-family housing also shows that upzoning does not lower housing costs nor produce affordable housing.

Legislation Does Not Protect Parking, Schools, Public Safety and Other Values

This legislation does not protect parking, schools, public safety, environmental concerns, and fiscal responsibility. Indeed, the language that prohibits denials of variances and special permits places no apparent limits on housing units that could overwhelm neighborhoods with no "objective development standards" in place. For example, a jurisdiction would be forced to approve a variance allowing a 60-foot high apartment building within a block of single-family units, where the other stringent exemption requirements would not apply. This is absurd.

To my knowledge, there is **NO** local community association or government that supports this legislation.

Finally, this statute is full of terms that are extremely vague to interpret and apply. For this reason alone, the bill sponsors should withdraw this legislation.

For these reasons, I urge you to oppose SB 0430 and HB 0503. Montgomery County's current zoning code has been carefully crafted with input from the affected communities. There has been no demonstration that the current Master Plan process is inadequate.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kevin Bromberg

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