



October 22, 2020

Council President Sidney Katz
Montgomery County Council
Stella Warner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Testimony regarding Bill 44-20 – Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statements – Advisory Committee Amendments

Habitat for Humanity would like to thank Lead Sponsor, Councilmember Navarro, and Co-Sponsors Councilmembers Alborno, Friedson, Glass, Hucker, Jawando, Katz, Rice, and Riemer for introducing this important legislation. Habitat for Humanity strongly supports Bill 44-20 as it requires Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statements for Zoning Text Amendments.

Zoning and land use policies have long been used to restrict housing types and sizes in certain neighborhoods. The effect of these policies has been to restrict access for lower income individuals and people of color to desirable communities by essentially pricing them out. Effects of exclusionary and restrictive zoning policies go far beyond housing. Housing segregation, caused by zoning and land use policies, leads to inequitable access to high quality healthcare, food, transportation, schools, parks and so much more. Housing segregation and discrimination have had a devastating effect on lower income individuals, but most specifically on Black households.

The Black homeownership rate is as low as it was 50 years ago and the ownership gap between Black families and white families is as far apart as it was in 1934. By allowing a variety of housing types in desirable neighborhoods, including duplexes, triplexes, and condos, we can work to bridge that gap while allowing families access to the high quality amenities enjoyed by others in our County.

Since Habitat for Humanity's founding on Koinonia Farm, a racially integrated community established in 1942, the organization has been working to build socioeconomically integrated communities where all people have access to safe, decent, and affordable housing. Over and over, Habitat has seen the generational change that comes from purchasing a home. Children of homeowners are more likely to be healthy and miss fewer days of school, go to college, earn more money, and many end up inheriting more wealth. It is imperative that we ensure every family in our community has equal access to opportunities allowing them to thrive and reach their full potential.

One of the most effective and important ways we can address racial and income inequities is by instituting antiracist, inclusive zoning policies that allow for the building of high quality, affordable units

across the entire continuum of housing in all communities across the County. Bill 44-20 is an important step in ensuring that future zoning text amendments not only do no harm, but that they work to make our County a more equitable place for all residents.

We appreciate the Council's dedication to social justice and racial equity. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Paukstis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Paukstis
President & CEO
Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland, Inc.

CC: Council Vice President Tom Hucker
Councilmember Gabe Albornoz
Councilmember Andrew Friedson
Councilmember Evan Glass
Councilmember Will Jawando
Councilmember Nancy Navarro
Councilmember Craig Rice
Councilmember Hans Riemer