

At Howard Progressive Project, we envision a more just Howard County, a place where every person in our community can grow to their fullest potential. We know that affordable housing is foundational to the educational and racial equity, and the economic opportunity and justice that we advocate for.

Without adequate and affordable housing, health and mental wellness suffer. Work is difficult to sustain. And for our children, education is compromised.

I teach children every year who struggle with homelessness, and I teach children who bear the burden of working to help pay the rent. Last year I taught a brilliant young man, a high school senior, who loved literature and the camaraderie of his sports team. But because of the skyrocketing cost of housing in Howard County, he had to work.

He came to school for 35 hours a week. And went to work for 40 hours a week – the overnight shift – at a donut factory. Our high schools have far too many kids like him – who spend their days at school and their evenings and nights cooking our restaurant meals or cleaning our office buildings – just so they can help keep roofs over their heads.

These students' families are some of the 6500 Howard County families who spend more than 50% of their gross monthly income on rent. Who are the others? The folks who staff our schools, hospitals, restaurants, and retail

establishments. They're our frontline workers, the folks who make our day to day life operate.

Housing affordability is a public policy problem and it has been made so much worse by recent exorbitant rent hikes. We are pleased that the Ball administration has put together this set of programs and bills to address it. And HPP and its founding partners in the Living Wage Coalition – the African American Coalition of Howard County and the Howard County Young Democrats – are proud to endorse it.

In this community that offers so much – great schools, top-notch public services, magnificent outdoor spaces, diverse retail choices – to so many, it is only right that we make sure our frontline worker families are part of our community. With innovative and multi-pronged policies like the ones County Executive Ball is proposing today, we can make home affordable and accessible for everyone in our Howard County community.

Thank you, County Executive Ball, for your leadership on this urgent and important issue.