

Good evening, Chair Rigby, Vice Chair Jung, and members Dr. Jones, Ms. Walsh, and Mr. Yungmann. My name is Kelly Klinefelter, and I am the president of Howard Progressive Project, a teacher, a WLHS mom, and a resident of District 4 in Columbia.

HPP is here tonight to call for a plan that makes sense for the future of all of our people – the people who already live in Howard County, the people who serve in our essential jobs in Howard County and WANT to live here but cannot and spend way too much of their time and treasure commuting here, and our children, in whom we've invested so much and who want to live here as adults.

A plan that makes sense will expand our housing supply. We should build 2,000 new homes each year, of which 25% should be affordable for households earning less than 60% of the median. Further, 10% of the affordable homes should meet ADA requirements. These homes could make space for the many people who live and work in Howard County and are struggling TODAY with housing – our teachers, our paras, our custodians, our frontline workers in our hospital, our

childcare centers, and our restaurants and other service establishments.

A plan that makes sense will allow multifamily and missing middle housing like duplexes, quadplexes and ADUs by right in more areas of the county, because these housing types are normally more affordable than single-family detached homes.

A plan that makes sense will create more incentives for the development of housing for seniors and others who have low incomes and/or disabilities. This community is an inclusive one – let's show it by building policy that DOES it.

A plan that makes sense will guarantee that today's affordable housing is not lost when its ownership changes. We should set a goal of zero net loss of existing housing for households with incomes below 60% of area median, and employ preservation and revitalization strategies to ensure we hit the goal. This is critical for so many

families, including the homeless. Let's recall that last May 5, 548 HCPSS children were homeless. That's 1/100 of our children, equivalent to the entire population of my son's middle school. We are the wealthiest county in the wealthiest state in the wealthiest nation humanity has known. Homelessness is our public policy failure and our responsibility to solve.

One way to ease the pressure on our housing crisis and school funding squeeze is through the redevelopment of Gateway. We should establish targets now for commercial, housing, school capacity and transportation in Gateway, and move forward rapidly with the redevelopment plan for that area. We have businesses large and small knocking on our door – along with homebuyers – asking to pay taxes here in Howard County. Let's welcome them.

If we choose not to expand our housing supply in the General Plan Update, we need to be clear – it is not a choice to preserve the status quo or to protect our schools and other infrastructure. It is a choice to put the county on the path to a deteriorating quality of life.

A plan that makes sense is one where we invest in smart growth that is dense and green, that revitalizes aging infrastructure and raises fees on developers, which you have the power to do, expands the county's tax base, and maintains our status as a favorable place for businesses, businesses that pay living wages to their workers and much needed taxes into our county coffers. We need to build smart and broaden our tax base so that we can build the world-class brick and mortar schools that our Howard County students deserve and the other institutions that our people rightly demand.

Let's grow our economy and extend housing opportunities to our young people, our seniors, our frontline workers and pandemic heroes, our neighbors with disabilities, our neighbors struggling with homelessness, our neighbors choosing between food and rent. Let's grow our neighborhoods and our transportation infrastructure. Let's grow our small businesses by extending to their employees the opportunity to work AND live and pay taxes in this beautiful community.

As always, thank you for the work you do for Howard County.