

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 and a resident of District 4 in Columbia. At HPP, our central organizing principle is community. We envision a more just Howard County, a place where every person can grow to their fullest potential.

There's an ugly myth in Howard County — that when we build an affordable housing unit, someone, somewhere in the world, with no connection to our community, hears about this affordable housing unit and decides to move their family to Howard County to burden our schools and our roads and our social services.

I use the word ugly intentionally because this myth is deeply rooted in an othering of people, in an assumption that we don't have an obligation to people who struggle to find housing. And I use the word myth intentionally. Because in my experience as a career teacher, a PTA president, a neighborhood activist and organizer, this is what it is. It's a myth, because so many people who live and work in Howard County – our students, our teachers, our paras, our kitchen staff, our custodians, our frontline workers – struggle with housing.

I'd like to share a few stories with you to dispel this ugly myth:

I taught a young woman this year who was homeless. She moved at least four times during the school year. She didn't have reliable access to wifi to complete her school work. She lost her laptop and charger in different

moves. Her mental health, learning, and grades suffered. She suffered. Her's is one story. As of 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.

I taught a young man this year who worked nights at a factory to help pay his family's rent. Because while his mother works days and his brother works nights and goes to community college, that's not enough to support them and the two younger children in the family. My student is a true scholar. When I asked a question, his hand was the first in the air. His insights into literature and life, his analysis and writing were the top in our class. But his 17 year old face was etched with exhaustion. This family of frontline workers, every one of whom worked in service jobs through the pandemic, pay more than 50% of their income to live in Howard County where they work and send their children to school. My student, an essential worker, and his family are working hard to achieve their American Dream. And yet the rent must eat first. And school comes second.

The adults who serve our students struggle with housing, as well. More than half of our HCPSS employees earn less than 60% of Howard County's median income, which means their incomes qualify them for a MIHU rental. Our shortage of teachers, paraeducators, and workforce housing are related public policy failures.

This ugly myth that affordable housing benefits outsiders is a tale we tell ourselves to absolve us of responsibility to the least-fortunate in our community, when in reality, the price of our absolution is a burden on the

backs of students, working families, and essential workers. It's time we dispel this myth and expand workforce housing. Doing so will benefit all of us who already live right here in Howard County, those in need of housing, our businesses who need workers, and those who want to live in a vibrant community.

Let's be a community that grows in a smart and inclusive way, growing our tax base to support the schools and services we all value so very much while building the housing infrastructure our community needs.

As such, HPP asks that the County Council amend and approve HoCo by Design with the following housing allocations:

- At least 2,000 new homes should be built each year.
- 25% of the new units, or a minimum of 500 homes, should be affordable to households earning below 60% of median income.
- Of the affordable homes, at least 10% should support residents with disabilities.

Thank you – all of you – for your service to our community and for hearing my testimony tonight.