

Testimony before the DC Zoning Commission

RE: Support for Zoning Case No. 04-33G:  
Make Inclusionary Zoning truly affordable

By Hanaleah Hoberman  
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Good evening Chairman Hood & members of the Zoning Commission:

My name is Hanaleah Hoberman. I live in the Parkview neighborhood in Ward 1. I am here as a concerned DC resident and as a direct service provider to urge you to make Inclusionary Zoning more affordable.

I am deeply concerned that we are not doing enough to address our city's growing affordability problem. As a social service provider who works with families fleeing domestic violence, I have seen how the high cost of housing in D.C. exacerbates and perpetuates domestic violence. When I think of the connection between domestic violence and re-victimization, I think of one of my clients, we'll call her Cristabel. Cristabel is a mother of three who works as a health aid in a nursing home. For the last 10 years, Mark, the father of her children, has been physically abusive towards Cristabel in a highly violent, escalating pattern of abusive categorized as having a high risk for fatality. Cristabel wants to leave Mark. In the last two years, Cristabel has fled to our shelter three times. But with so few options to find permanent affordable housing in the city, every time, Cristabel has returned to her apartment, a place where Mark can always find her. And when the money for rent is short, and all her other options are exhausted, Cristabel lets him back in. She returns to Mark again and again, not for love, but for rent money.

I work with survivors in a wide income range, from middle income to low income residents. When abuse starts, and survivors have to look for housing on a single income, they have few options to find safe affordable housing in their price range. While many middle income young professionals find more affordable housing through group living situations with other young people, young parents rarely have this option available to them. Although there are many crisis shelters and

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some transitional housing programs in the city, these options are temporary, and many survivors end up moving back in with their abusers or moving back into the same neighborhoods as their abusers when they are unable to find long term affordable housing in a safe area.

Survivors need the flexibility in their housing that Inclusionary Zoning can provide. In order to help survivors move to safety, it is important that D.C. commit to programs that create affordable housing throughout the city, not just in a few neighborhoods that may be unsafe if a survivor is trying to flee.

I commend the DC Zoning Commission for creating Inclusionary Zoning, it's a policy that holds great promise. I am, however, disappointed that it is providing so few truly affordable homes.

IZ is creating most units affordable at the 80% AMI level, and few at the 50% AMI level. For my clients, many of whom are single mothers living on single incomes, these 80% AMI units are far too expensive and do not help. Apartments priced at 50 and 60% of AMI can help survivors as they reestablish their lives. I urge the Zoning Commission to ensure that IZ meets housing opportunities for those who need it most by adopting option 1B, a proposal which was originally put forth by the Office of Planning.

Additionally, I want to urge the Zoning Commission to clarify that the option provided for the Mayor or her designee to buy an IZ unit, should allow these units to be rented to clients in programs serving lower income households. This might be the most direct way that the lowest income survivors in D.C. could benefit from inclusionary zoning. Currently, the implementing law prohibits the leasing of a unit purchased by the Mayor. I ask that you state your intent to allow for the leasing of such units.

Thank you for creating Inclusionary Zoning and your efforts to fix it so that it can truly make DC an inclusive place for low income families. I know that many of us in this room, including many of you on the commission, recognize the need for housing at the 60% AMI level. I urge you to adopt option 1B to ensure IZ serves people at the lowest level possible because the need so great, and the consequences of not helping people like my clients is so dire.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.