Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Devon Coleman <dcgems202@gmail.com>
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To: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: Case 26-RE – Written Testimony of Devon Coleman

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Hello,

Please find my written testimony for Case 26-RE, the Zoning Commission roundtable on racial equity in zoning, below for inclusion in the record. I am also signed up to testify at the roundtable.

Thank you,
Devon Coleman

Members of the Zoning Commission,

My name is Devon Coleman. I am a Ward 5 resident, a renter, and a community advocate. I support strengthening the Racial Equity Tool.

Across DC, renters live with mold, leaks, and broken repairs. They report it to the Department of Buildings, their ANC, the Council, and the Mayor's office, and still wait. Mold is not just a repair problem. It is a health problem, and it hits Black and low-income renters hardest.

Voucher holders face an extra layer. Some vouchers only work in certain buildings, and there are no clear rules for moving between units or voucher types. Families get stuck in unsafe homes while agencies figure out who is responsible. Market-rate renters face the same delays when agencies do not talk to each other.

This is a zoning issue. Zoning decides what gets built, where, and next to what. It decides how many affordable and family-sized homes exist. That decides where voucher holders and low-income families can live.

I saw this at Buzzard Point in Southwest. New apartment towers sit next to a power substation and the smokestacks of an old coal and oil power plant. That site is still under a 2024 environmental review ordered by the District. A marker on the same block notes that urban renewal in the 1950s and 1960s demolished almost every working-class home in Southwest. Poor residents were pushed out once. Now the area has been rezoned for dense housing beside an industrial site still being checked. The Racial Equity Tool should look at conditions like these, not just buildings.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 26-RE
EXHIBIT NO. 11

I ask the Commission to:

1. Make the Racial Equity Tool a public form, so everyone can see which questions were answered and which were skipped.
2. Set basic community engagement standards. If developers do not meet them, do not hear the project.
3. Require better data from the Office of Planning, including the Anti-Displacement Strategy and how many affordable homes low-income residents actually need.
4. When tenants are affected, require proof that tenant rights laws are followed, and a plan written with residents for relocating and returning.
5. Require projects to include family-sized units, deeper affordability, and outreach to voucher holders.
6. Require the Tool to consider voucher holders and nearby environmental hazards, and to show how agencies like the Department of Buildings, the DC Housing Authority, and DHCD will work together, so residents are not left waiting.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,
Devon Coleman
Ward 5