

April 14, 2016

Chairman Anthony Hood
DC Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

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

Chairman Hood, and members of the Zoning Commission, I am pleased to present testimony in favor of a robust inclusionary zoning rule targeting low- and moderate-income DC residents.

My name is Anita Hairston and I am an Associate Director at PolicyLinkⁱ, a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity. PolicyLink has long been an ally of the network of advocates in this city that are working to advance equity-driven, affordable housing policy. Equity is at the core of our work, and we seek to advance a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. We believe that we will unlock the promise in this nation by unlocking the promise in us all.

I present this testimony in both my professional and personal capacity. I am a resident of Brookland, with a deep dedication to ensuring that this city fosters just and fair inclusion of all our residents. I write in support of the proposal to make DC's IZ rental units affordable to households earning up to 60% of Area Median Income.

I commend the Zoning Commission for enacting inclusionary zoning in DC. After several years of implementing this program, it is time to assess how well it is addressing the city's affordable housing needs.

Households earning less than 60% of Area Median Income include: workers who labor at our construction sites, serve as cashiers in our retail outlets, look after our children in day care centers, and serve food in our restaurants and cafes.

There are several trends facing low- and moderate income households:

- Analysis from the DC Fiscal Policy Instituteⁱⁱ finds that households at 60% and below of Area Media Income are underserved by DC's affordable housing initiatives.
- For the portion of these workers who earn a minimum wage salary, they must work more than 100 hours each week to afford a one-bedroom apartment in DC.ⁱⁱⁱ
- There are racial disparities in housing affordability in the city, where Black and Latino renters pay 54% and 50% of their income, respectively, for housing, compared to white renters who pay 41% of their income on housing.^{iv}

These trends point to the urgent need for more affordable housing in DC. A well-targeted IZ policy is one of the most important tools to meet that objective.

IZ is a national best practice for affordable housing policy. There is solid precedent to focus IZ units on families making less than 60% of AMI. For example, San Francisco's inclusionary zoning

program targets households at 55% of AMI. Developers are required to set aside 12% of the units for affordable housing. There is a proposal to increase that requirement to 25%, in recognition of the how much of the housing is out of reach for families in that city.

From a fair housing perspective, Option 1B the best route to using IZ to help achieve equitable development in DC. In a city where two-thirds of all inclusionary zoning registered households are at 50% AMI or below, we cannot hope to maintain DCs historic diversity by favoring households closer to 80% or 100% of AMI. There is already a mismatch between the need for and availability of affordable housing, particularly for our lowest-income households, which are disproportionately households of color. Gentrification is happening throughout our hometown, which now has the sixth highest rental market nationwide, and this is a unique opportunity to take a meaningful step in staunching the pressures that are pushing too many long-time residents out.

Putting DC's most vulnerable residents front and center is smart economic policy^v: investing and increasing opportunities for our most cost-burdened households will demonstrate the city's commitment to maintaining the diversity of families and incomes necessary for a balanced and healthy city economy. The Zoning Commission has an opportunity to optimize the IZ program to resolve the housing challenges faced by many DC families. I encourage you to take the necessary steps to ensure that the city uses this powerful tool to its full potential, so that it benefits all, particularly lower income households. I appreciate the opportunity to share this testimony.

ⁱ For more information about this testimony, please contact: Anita Hairston, PolicyLink, 202-906-8034 or anita@policylink.org. More information about PolicyLink is available at: www.policylink.org

ⁱⁱ DC Fiscal Policy Institute. "Going, Going, Gone: DC's Vanishing Affordable Housing," available at: <http://www.dcfpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Going-Going-Gone-Rent-Burden-Final-3-6-15format-v2-3-10-15.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition. See: <http://nlihc.org/oor>

^{iv} Source: PolicyLink/PERE National equity atlas. See: www.nationalequityatlas.org

^v Source: PolicyLink. See: https://www.bcbnsmnfoundation.org/system/asset/resource/pdf_file/32/Policy_Link_-_America_s_Tomorrow_.pdf