

October 18, 2016

The Honorable Phil Mendelson  
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest  
Suite 504  
Washington, D.C. 20004

The Honorable Anita Bonds  
Chair, Committee on Housing and Community Development  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest  
Suite 110  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson and Councilmember Bonds:

Housing providers in the District of Columbia share the Council's commitment to providing quality housing that meets the needs of District residents. We are committed to working with the Council, the Mayor and other housing stakeholders to develop comprehensive, balanced policies that meet this goal.

For over a year, housing providers worked on Mayor Muriel Bowser's Housing Preservation Strike Force ("Strike Force") with stakeholders in rental housing matters, including members of the Council, agency staff, residents and tenant advocates. This was a collaborative and comprehensive process -- and the final recommendations should be considered as the Council and the Administration develop a balanced, comprehensive housing strategy and a road map for preserving rental homes.

The Committee on Housing and Community Development ("Committee") is conducting a hearing tomorrow on three bills, B21-880, the "Rent Concession and Rent Ceiling Abolition Clarification Amendment Act of 2016"; B21-884, the "Rental Housing Affordability Stabilization Amendment Act of 2016" and B21-885, the "Four-unit Rental Housing Tenant Grandfathering Amendment Act of 2016," which will undermine our shared goal of preserving the District's aging housing stock, and could actually harm the very residents the measures are purportedly designed to protect.

We simply cannot achieve our shared goal of preserving housing without a cooperative, collaborative and balanced approach. That means the owners of older apartment buildings must have an economically viable path for maintaining these properties for current and future generations of tenants. Every element of the District's comprehensive housing strategy should complement the larger goal, not undermine it. This includes, for example, consideration of the Strike Force's final

report. Quickly moving these three bills prior to the Strike Force's findings would be ill-advised as the report will inform ongoing discussions around responsible tools for responding to the District's housing needs.

A balanced approach to preserving rental homes is critical to continued investment in existing rental housing. Piecemeal changes like those proposed in these bills are already creating uncertainty among investors willing to provide critically important financing for improvements to an aging housing stock. The lack of such investment could have negative long-term consequences on the ability of housing providers to continue to provide safe and habitable homes for the many residents seeking a home in our rental communities

A consideration of all elements of the rental housing sector is critical. We must allow investment in aging, deteriorating housing stock, while at the same time adopting balanced tools that protect residents from unreasonable rent increases. This will require, for example, investment by the District in tools that actually benefit those residents in need of such assistance. Unlike the measures before the Committee, currently available tools that can and will provide assistance to low and moderate income tenants, include, for example, the District's Opportunity to Purchase and rent supplement programs.

We urge the Council to take a thoughtful and deliberate approach to housing policy that includes our organizations and other relevant stakeholders, before enacting legislation with far reaching consequences.

Respectfully,



Margaret "Peggy" Jeffers, Esq.

Executive Vice President

Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington



Lisa María Mallory

CEO

District of Columbia Building Industry Association

Cc:

The Honorable David Grosso (At-Large)

The Honorable Elissa Silverman (At-Large)  
The Honorable Robert White, Jr. (At-Large)  
The Honorable Brianne Nadeau (Ward 1)  
The Honorable Jack Evans (Ward 2)  
The Honorable Mary Cheh (Ward 3)  
The Honorable Brandon T. Todd (Ward 4)  
The Honorable Kenyan McDuffie (Ward 5)  
The Honorable Charles Allen (Ward 6)  
The Honorable Yvette Alexander (Ward 7)  
The Honorable LaRuby May (Ward 8)

