



AOBA

Apartment and Office Building Association
of Metropolitan Washington

Press Release

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY HOUSING PROVIDERS ENCOURAGED BY TENANT SURVEY

Montgomery County, Maryland, March 5, 2010: An association representing rental housing providers in Montgomery County said that its members are encouraged by the results of a “renter satisfaction survey” commissioned by a Tenant Work Group convened by County Executive Isaiah Leggett. The survey is contained in the report the work group will present to the County Executive today. “Most importantly, tenants reported that rent increases have been moderate and reasonable over the last five years,” said W. Shaun Pharr, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for the Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington (AOBA). “25% of tenants had no increase at all in that time. Of tenants who did have rent increases, 29% said they were 3% or less, and 52% said they were between 4 and 7%. Further, 78% of tenants whose rents rose said they did so less frequently than the annual increases allowed by law. This, at a time when operating costs, particularly for energy, were increasing and property taxes for many buildings—unlike for single-family homes—were on the rise, as well.”

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The hard data reported by tenants, the trade association said, does not support the tenant work group's call for a County-wide rent control program. "Rent control is a failed social and housing policy that has been outlawed in 34 states because of the damage it causes to a community's housing stock by discouraging investment in rental housing. Montgomery County taxpayers have supported an outstanding array of policies and programs that direct millions of dollars toward providing affordable housing to those most in need of assistance, which is a far more effective use of their tax dollars than paying for a rent control bureaucracy. Elected officials know this, as well," Pharr said.

Housing providers took heart in other results of the tenant survey, as well, noting that clear majorities of tenants reported satisfaction with their own apartments, their buildings and their housing providers. 88% said they had never had a problem that caused them to contact the County for assistance in getting it resolved, and 81% said they were comfortable taking such problems directly to their housing provider.

The association noted that the survey did show that renters are not as aware as they should be about the County's services available to address tenant concerns. "Montgomery County has some of the most extensive laws, regulations, programs and agencies in the U.S. dedicated to tenant rights, housing provider responsibilities, dispute resolution and code compliance, but the survey shows that tenant awareness and use of them needs to be improved. The Tenant Work Group has made numerous recommendations about how to improve those functions, as well as outreach and education about them, and we look forward to assisting the County in those efforts," Pharr said.