GSG41-R01
A Resolution Calling for Prince George’s County Council to Implement a Cap on Rent Increases

Summary: The resolution calls upon Prince George’s County Council to implement a limit or ban on rent increases for its constituents without stipulations of loss of income. This request considers the financial strain experienced by graduate students who are residents of Prince George’s County.

WHEREAS, current and future University of Maryland graduate students may choose to reside in Prince George’s County, which is an advantageous option given the proximity to campus; and

WHEREAS, a third of University of Maryland graduate students are international students¹, and these students may be especially vulnerable to predatory practices by landlords; and

WHEREAS, despite the Graduate School increasing the minimum stipend for graduate students by 17.6 percent since July 2018², UMD graduate students on average still earn only 53 percent of the calculated cost of living in Prince George’s County³, and similarly earn only 54 percent of the median income of residents of Prince George’s County⁴; and

WHEREAS, the financial strain already experienced by graduate students was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, during the virtual format of university courses, many graduate students, who either cannot obtain university housing or who must wait for limited university housing availability with priority given to undergraduate students⁵, were not in university housing where they could have received refunds for unused housing, and subsequently could not break their leases with their landlords when they may have needed to reside elsewhere; and

WHEREAS, graduate students living in Prince George’s County face or may soon face rent increases, resulting in increased financial strain or instability on top of managing their education, family, health, and other obligations; and

¹ Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment (Grad Student Profile). The count of international graduate students was slightly lower than ⅓ of the total for Fall 2020.
² 2021 Stipend Memo from the Graduate School (https://svp.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2020-07/fy21_ga_fellow_stipend_memo.pdf)
³ MIT’s Living Wage Calculator (http://livingwage.mit.edu). The calculator estimates the cost of living in Prince George’s County to be $41,222 before taxes for one adult with no children; in Dean Steve Fetter’s testimony before the Senate Finance Committee in 2021, he stated the average stipend for graduate students is $22,000 per year.
⁴ United States Census Bureau (Prince George's County). The median income in Prince George’s County was $40,372 in 2019.
⁵ UMD Department of Resident Life (Graduate Student Housing).
WHEREAS, other Maryland area governing bodies including those of Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Frederick City, Howard County, Montgomery County and Salisbury City either implemented caps on rent increases or bans on rent increases; with the calculated cost of living in Howard County, for example, being more than $8000 less than Prince George’s County’s cost of living; and

WHEREAS, the median income of Prince George’s County residents is less than that of Anne Arundel County, Howard County, and Montgomery County, meaning that without a universal cap on rent increases, Prince George’s County is doing a disservice to its residents who, with a lower median income compared to residents of some other Maryland counties, would greatly benefit from this universal protection; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Housing and Community Development passed regulations during the COVID-19 health emergency which banned the increase of rent prior to or during the emergency, but only for tenants who provide in writing proof of “substantial loss of income;” and

WHEREAS, Prince George’s County is the only Maryland area with an income-related stipulation in rent increase protections; this requirement demands more work on the part of the tenant to avail of the protections and does not universally guarantee the protections will be granted.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Graduate Student Government calls upon Prince George’s County Council to implement a cap on all rent increases, with GSG’s recommendation that the cap be near 3 percent, considering the precedent of other Maryland area governing bodies implementing similar protections without income stipulations.

Author(s): Gabrielle Wy CCJS

Sponsor(s): Autumn Perkey (VPLA)

Date and Time of Submission: September 2, 2021

Date of Presentation: September 10, 2021

---

6 Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library (The People’s Law Library of Maryland)
7 MIT’s Living Wage Calculator (http://livingwage.mit.edu) Calculated costs of living are for one adult with no children.
8 United States Census Bureau.
9 Prince George’s County Department of Housing & Community Development (Landlord-Tenant Code)
Action(s) Taken:

Decision of GSG President

Signature of GSG President Date