

**From:** Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba <stephanieedc@yahoo.com>

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**To:** JRaitt@town.arlington.ma.us, ebenson@town.arlington.ma.us, KLau@town.arlington.ma.us, MTintocalis@town.arlington.ma.us, dwatson@town.arlington.ma.us, rzseberry@town.arlington.ma.us

**Subject:** In support of Warrant Article 45

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Dear Redevelopment Board Members,

I'm writing in support of Article 45, to increase the percentage of affordable housing units in new private developments from 15% to 25%.

I am both a resident of Arlington and a pediatric public health researcher focused on the child and family health and economic well-being impacts of public policy, including affordable homes.

I'm in favor of this article because there is an immense need for and important health-promoting potential of more affordable homes in Arlington, and COVID-19 has made this need even more urgent. Amending our inclusionary zoning rate is one of many ways we can support the health of families and other community residents through increasing the availability of affordable homes in town.

Every child should have the opportunity to thrive. To build resiliency early in life, children need stable, affordable homes to prevent and heal from physical and mental health challenges. Yet, too many children encounter barriers that prevent them from growing strong, and achieving their optimal physical, emotional, and mental health. Unstable housing, whose definition includes housing costs that are out of reach, can be one of the greatest barriers to good health. Research shows that children who experience housing instability for longer periods of time are more likely to experience mental and physical health challenges and developmental delays. Research also shows that pre-pandemic one in five children had a diagnosable mental health condition. We've all heard the news reports about the twin spikes of people struggling to pay their rent and of poor mental health for both adults and children during the pandemic. Concerns about being able to pay the rent only exacerbate these mental well-being challenges. In fact, my research team and I estimated that unstable housing will cost the US \$111 Billion over the next 10 years related to worse mental and physical health for adults and children and impacts on children's brain development. While Arlington obviously won't bear the full cost, a portion of that cost is borne by the Town with greater need for health and educational services across the age spectrum.

We are far behind surrounding towns in our progress on this issue. The redevelopment board has been doing a lot of work to increase affordable units, yet from 2001 to 2018 Arlington only increased its subsidized housing inventory percentage by 0.1%. Housing affordability is an issue requiring urgent attention and it's clear we need to do more to reach our goal of 10% affordability.

Systemic racism and policies that promote inequity—from redlining and exclusionary zoning to systematic disenfranchisement from economic prosperity—have meant that families of color and immigrant families have been disproportionately affected by housing instability. These disparities in access to homes contribute to racial and ethnic health inequities across the lifespan. The Town has pledged to work on rooting out systemic racism in all areas, including housing. These policies were in place here in Arlington, too. Thus today, as a Town, we have our own responsibility for making a new and inclusive future.

Without meaningful affordable housing, market-rate housing is set at prices that are exclusionary to most Black and brown people, as well as people more likely to live on fixed incomes or rely on housing vouchers, such as people with disabilities. If our goal is to make Arlington a place for people of all backgrounds and abilities, we need to make housing more affordable.

If you'd like to learn more about the research I've referenced in my letter, I include several links below.

Thank you,

Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, MPH

<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/features/kf-childrens-mental-health-report.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5101a1>.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00175-z>

<https://childrenshealthwatch.org/housing-as-a-prescription-for-health-now-and-in-the-future/>

<https://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/Unstable-Housing-and-Caregiver-and-Child-Health-in-Renter-Families.pdf>

<https://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/CHW-Stable-Homes-2-pager-web.pdf>

<https://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/CHW-SHA-Action-Report-for-web.pdf>

<https://childrenshealthwatch.org/dr-megan-sandels-testimony-before-the-house-of-representatives-committee-on-oversight-and-reform/>