

HOUSING COMMISSION  
KELLEN MACBETH, CHAIR

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October 16, 2024

Hon. Libby Garvey, Chair  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Recovery Residences

Dear Ms. Garvey:

At its September 5, 2024, and October 10, 2024, hybrid and virtual public meetings, the Housing Commission considered the Recovery Residences Zoning Ordinance Amendment. The Commission discussed concerns that Arlington County's existing zoning code is discriminatory and that failure to amend the zoning code in response to Oxford House's request for reasonable accommodation would potentially violate Fair Housing laws. The Commission felt strongly that Recovery Residences should be treated like other homes for individuals with disabilities (individuals suffering from substance use disorder meet the legal definition for the disability protected class) and that it would be discriminatory to restrict them to having only four unrelated individuals in a home, instead of the eight requested by Oxford House.

Commissioners also discussed the concerns raised by some residents about the police presence at Oxford House recovery residences and other issues and agreed that the concerns are unrelated to the reasonable accommodation request and proposed zoning change. Some commissioners recommended that the county separately work with Oxford House and the concerned residents to address their issues.

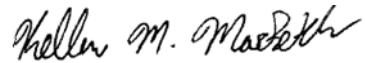
Commissioners also encouraged staff to move forward with the zoning study, as referenced in the Fair Housing Plan adopted by the County Board in 2023, to look at raising the cap on more than four unrelated individuals living in a single-family home to eight unrelated individuals. Some of the commissioners expressed concern that the existing zoning ordinance discriminates against non-traditional families, renters, and low-income individuals who would like to live in Arlington's single-family neighborhoods.

Some commissioners also noted that the 2015 Affordable Housing Master Plan called for a review of the county's zoning ordinance to increase the limit on the number of unrelated persons who can occupy a single family residence to ensure that a group of persons with disabilities, including those with physical, or other disabilities, or senior adults have the option to live independently in the community to increase options for housing affordability.

The Commission supports the staff recommendation and voted 8-0 at the October meeting to recommend approval by the County Board.

Thank you for your consideration and support of fair housing in Arlington.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kellen M. MacBeth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Kellen MacBeth  
Chair