***Testimony 1:***

*Kate, Mother of twins, Habitat Homeowner, Previous Naperville Resident (Testimony read by Associate Director of DuPage Habitat for Humanity, Andrew Sparks)*

Good evening everyone!

My name is Andrew Sparks, and I am the Associate Director with DuPage Habitat for Humanity. We are a housing organization that works to see a world where everyone has a decent place to live. And today, we stand in support of the Affordable Housing Incentive Program, and urge you to accept option 1, as a long overdue step for affordable housing in Naperville.

I am going to share the story of a partner who has gained homeownership through our program. Her name is Kate Melekhova. She would have liked to be here tonight, though as a single working mother of twin boys, she was unable to take the night off.

Kate came to the US from Russia to work as a project manager 11 years ago. She quickly settled in and met her husband. Not long after, she learned she was expecting twin boys–but she also learned that her pregnancy was high risk. She quickly found solace because of the high-quality medical attention in DuPage County. Her doctors were able to save her pregnancy and treat her premature boys during their three months stay in the NICU.

However, due to no fault of her own, Kate found herself in a marriage that was no longer healthy. She obtained an order of protection against her husband, which left her with no stable income, a car loan under her name, and no place to live.

Kate made multiple attempts to keep her children connected to their life in Naperville. She was accepted into Bridge Communities, supported by the Naperville Rotary Club. She and her sons put down roots in Naper Trails, attended a local church which served as her local family unit, and her boys were thriving at Ann Reid Early Childhood Center.

Naperville was a place to offer her boys a better life than she had. She worked hard to make Naperville a reality. However, no matter how hard she worked to bring in $26,000 a year for her family of 3, there was no opportunity for affordable housing in Naperville.

In 2017 we began working with Kate and in 2018 she became a homeowner in Westmont. While she was beyond thankful for this opportunity, she was saddened that there was no opportunity for her to stay in the community she had grown to love.

Kate is just one example of someone who cannot afford to make the most of life in Naperville–single parent households, young professionals, and essential workers all find it difficult to afford living in Naperville.

When asking Kate what she would like you all to know today she responded with this: “The right to have a safe shelter is a basic human right. We cannot live up to our full potential until those basic needs are satisfied. We cannot raise happy, smart and creative children when there is no opportunity to.”

This affordable housing proposal is an opportunity to do that, and we urge you all to take it, and vote for option 1.

Thank you.