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January 27, 2020

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chairman of the Environment and Transportation Committee,
Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building Room 251
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Barve,

I write to express my support for HB 30-2020, the Sunset Island Act, which will stop condominium boards from withholding important information from homeowners in their communities. The bill was introduced earlier this month by Delegate Courtney Watson and is being considered before your Committee on January 28, 2020.

The Sunset Island Act is designed to prevent the reoccurrence of the kind of awful situation we witnessed in Ocean City where residents are seeking compensation for the cost of repairs caused by a developer's shoddy construction. These residents cannot get the developer to pay for these repairs because the previous condominium board waived rights to future repairs and did not disclose this agreement to their homeowners. As a result, the current owners are having to pay more than \$50,000 per unit because these undisclosed deals were not prohibited.

Sadly, the experiences of the Ocean City homeowners are not unique. Indeed, this same builder used arbitration provisions in agreements and other legal strategies to immunize it from any fault attributable to negligent, faulty, or deficient building practices in other developments. A home is typically an American family's most valuable asset. Buying a home is one of the most important financial decisions one can make. All the more reason that the decision should not be made in the dark. Requiring a homebuyer to agree to arbitration and non-disclosure provisions is simply unfair and abusive. Americans homebuyers should not have to forfeit their day in court when the matter at stake is the safety and soundness of their home. Nor should their complaints about shoddy construction and building code violations be muzzled by abusive legal tactics.

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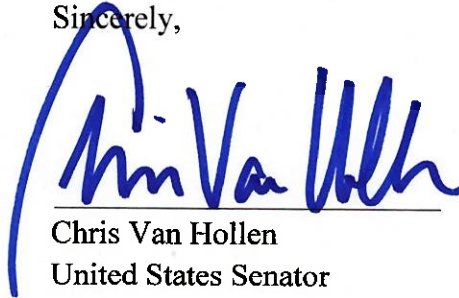
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This legislation cannot fix what's already been done to the residents of Sunset Island. Because of this hard truth, I commend these residents all the more for their perseverance in working to ensure that what happened to them does not happen to others. Finally, I commend Delegate Watson for introducing this needed legislation, and I support its swift passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Chris Van Hollen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and "H".

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator