

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN  
MARYLAND

SH-110 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON DC 20510  
OFFICE (202) 224-4654  
FAX (202) 228-0629

# United States Senate

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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.

#### STATE OFFICES

MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
111 ROCKVILLE PIKE  
SUITE 960  
ROCKVILLE, MD 20850  
PHONE (301) 545-1500  
FAX (301) 545-1512

ANNE ARUNDEL &  
SOUTHERN MARYLAND  
60 WEST STREET  
SUITE 107  
ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401  
PHONE (410) 263-1325

EASTERN SHORE  
204 CEDAR STREET  
SUITE 200C  
CAMBRIDGE, MD 21613  
PHONE (410) 221-2074

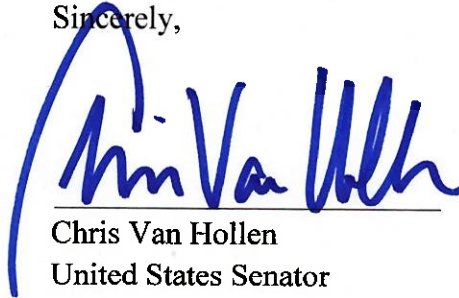
BALTIMORE REGION  
1900 NORTH HOWARD STREET  
SUITE 100  
BALTIMORE, MD 21218  
PHONE (667) 212-4610

WESTERN MARYLAND  
32 WEST WASHINGTON STREET  
SUITE 203  
HAGERSTOWN, MD 21740  
PHONE (301) 797-2826

PRINCE GEORGE'S  
COUNTY  
1101 MERCANTILE LANE  
SUITE 210  
LARGO, MD 20774  
PHONE (301) 322-6560

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".

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Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator