



Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition

**Testimony to the Ways and Means Committee
HB0110: Baltimore County - Homestead Property Tax Credit Notice
Lead Registry and Code Compliance - Pilot Program
Position: Favorable**

January 29, 2020

Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401
Cc: Members, Ways and Means Committee

Honorable Chair Kaiser and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition (MCRC) is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that advances financial justice and economic inclusion for Maryland consumers through research, education, direct service, and advocacy. Our 8,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland. In 2019, the Fair Housing Action Center became a program under the umbrella of MCRC.

Lead is a powerful neurotoxin that has long plagued our state's children and their families. In 2018, Baltimore County saw 30 new cases of lead poisoning in children, the third-highest number of new cases, just below Baltimore City and Prince George's County. Often when we talk about lead paint and lead poisoning, we look at rental housing as the culprit. However, of those 30 new cases, almost half were found to occur in owner-occupied housing.

Lead poisoning is known to increase aggression/poor impulse control and ADHD in children and adolescents, and a recent report published in 2017 by the National Bureau of Economic Research that focused on children in Rhode Island suggests that even a one-unit increase in lead increased the probability of suspension from school by approximately six to nine percent. School suspensions and expulsions greatly increase a child's chance of ending up in the criminal justice system -- a system that costs Maryland taxpayers approximately one billion dollars annually.



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Reaching homeowners in order to encourage registration of their pre-1978 properties with the Maryland Department of the Environment has historically been a challenge. Requiring the State Department of Assessments and Taxation to include information on registering properties and the procedure along with every property assessment will reach a larger pool of homeowners, and could potentially encourage families with children to reach out to their healthcare providers for lead testing and follow-up services, improving their physical and educational outcomes.

For these reasons, we support HB0110 and urge a favorable report.

Best,

Carol Ott
Tenant Advocacy Director
Fair Housing Action Center of Maryland