

BRIAN E. FROSH
Attorney General

ELIZABETH F. HARRIS
Chief Deputy Attorney General

CAROLYN QUATTROCKI
Deputy Attorney General



WILLIAM D. GRUHN
Chief
Consumer Protection Division

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION

Writer's Fax No.

Writer's Direct Dial No.

410-576-7942
kstrughn@oag.state.md.us
Fax: 410-576-7040

January 26, 2021

To: The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Karen S. Straughn
Consumer Protection Division

Re: House Bill 313 – Cooperative Housing Corporations, Condominiums, and Homeowners Associations – Reserve Studies - Statewide (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General submits the following written testimony in support of House Bill 313 submitted by Delegate Marvin E. Holmes, Jr. This bill requires common ownership communities to conduct reserve studies prior to the first meeting at which members other than the developer have a majority of votes in the association and every five (5) years thereafter. It further requires that an owner or developer of the community provide the amount of the recommended reserve fund to the association at the time of the first meeting and that every annual budget include reserve funds equal to the recommended reserve fund amount. Finally, this bill gives the governing body of the association the authority to increase a levied assessment to cover the recommended reserve funding amount required regardless of any provision in the governing documents restricting assessment increases that may be levied in a year.

Reserve studies review the common elements of an association to determine the major repairs and replacements that may be needed in the future and ensure that the association is properly planning for these estimated costs. Such studies not only help to secure the financial stability of the association, they are also needed to enable members to buy and sell their homes, since most banks and mortgage companies will not lend money to owners who reside in associations that do not have current reserve studies. The costs incurred to do the reserve study will be commensurate with the types and amount of common property that must be maintained, so smaller communities are unlikely to be overburdened by this law.

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
HB 313
January 26, 2021
Page Two

The Consumer Protection Division has received complaints from associations that have been turned over by a developer who failed to leave any money in the reserve fund, placing the association in a difficult monetary position. The Division has also received calls and complaints from members in associations that are assessed with very high special assessments as a result of not having enough funds in their reserve accounts because reserve studies had not been done for a significant period of time. This bill would help to protect against these scenarios.

For these reasons, we ask that the Environment and Transportation Committee return a favorable report on this bill.

cc: The Honorable Marvin E. Holmes, Jr.
Members, Environment and Transportation Committee