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February 21, 2023

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

From: Karen S. Straughn
Consumer Protection Division

Re: House Bill 315 – Multifamily Dwellings – Smoking Policies (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General submits the following written testimony in support of House Bill 315 sponsored by former Delegate Alonzo T. Washington. This bill requires the governing body of a common ownership community to develop a smoking policy if the property is a multifamily dwelling.

Smoking, including second-hand smoke, leads to disease and disability and harms nearly every organ system of the body. It is the leading cause of preventable death. In addition, there are many unknowns about vaping, including what chemicals make up the vapor and how they affect physical health over the long term. Emerging data suggests links to chronic lung disease and asthma as well as cardiovascular disease. When an individual purchases a home in a multifamily dwelling, however, they may be involuntarily exposed to these risks by the actions of their neighbors, which they cannot easily avoid. By requiring associations to develop a smoking policy that mandates where smoking and vaping may be authorized and where it may be prohibited, as well as establishing fines for violations of the policy, association members can have a role in determining how and where they may be exposed to these harmful chemicals.

The Consumer Protection Division has received complaints from residents in common ownership communities who are dismayed by the inability to have any control over whether they are exposed to second-hand smoke. While our office attempts to mediate these concerns, they rarely result in any positive outcome due to the inability of an association to control the actions of their residents in this respect. This bill would provide a greater ability to ensure that those who wish to be protected from second-hand smoke can choose to live in associations which

provide greater protections.

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

cc: The Honorable Alonzo T. Washington
Members, Environment and Transportation Committee