



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of SB 817 – Multifamily Dwellings - Smoking Policies

Many condo buildings in the State of Maryland are old and outdated – leaving families vulnerable to secondhand smoke that can seep through unsealed walls and floors. For adults who do not smoke, breathing secondhand smoke has immediate harmful effects on the heart and blood vessels. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), secondhand smoke causes nearly 34,000 premature deaths from heart disease each year in the United States among adults who do not smoke. Smoking is especially dangerous for newborns and children – there are more than 1,000 infant deaths in the U.S. every year that are related to smoking.

To help address this longstanding problem, I am proposing SB 817 - which will provide more options to families and individuals affected by secondhand smoke. The bill would simply require a common ownership group of multi-family housing to develop a policy on smoking.

It does not take much research to find that being exposed to secondhand smoke poses immediate, serious health risks to Maryland residents – especially to those who are living with underlying medical conditions. Unfortunately, many families in our State have no recourse to file a complaint when faced with a neighbor whose smoking is affecting their health and well-being.

While the provisions laid out in SB 817 are important – they are also not overly burdensome. The bill simply requires ownership of multi-family housing (i.e. condo associations) to create a smoking policy if they do not have one. It must include basic provisions such as:

- The locations where smoking is allowed on the premises;
- Any conditions on the ability to smoke in areas where smoking is authorized;
- Potential fines for violations of the policy; and
- Guidelines to submit a complaint about policy violators.

The requirements laid out in this bill are straightforward steps that every common ownership group should have already be taking – yet many residents throughout our State are left in the dark when faced with this problem. This bill is an important first step in addressing the issue of secondhand smoke in our communities.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable committee report on SB 817.