Testimony for the House Environment and Transportation Committee

Friday, March 1, 2024

HB 1295 - Real Property - Residential Rental Apartments - Air-Conditioning Requirements

Favorable

Dear Chair Korman, Vice-chair Boyce, and committee members.

I write to you to express my strong support for Del. Mary Lehman's bill, HB 1295. As a housing and tenant rights activist in Southern Maryland, passing this legislation would greatly increase the habitability and standard of living for countless renters.

In Southern Maryland, specifically Charles County, we have seen the effects of air conditioning, not being mandated. In June of 2022 Headen House and Huntingtown apartment complexes, which are managed by the same property management company, were in the news due to residents not having working air conditioning during the summer's hottest week. As residents were forced to go to cooling centers, their concerns were being disregarded by the property manager.

As we have seen with previous tenants rights campaigns, throughout the state and country, the only way to ensure that renters live in a habitable environment is by regulating the housing industry. In Maryland we mandate property owners provide; heat, running water, and electricity, it only makes logical sense that air conditioning be included.

Every summer multiple counties open libraries, movie theaters, and other buildings as cooling centers, because they recognize that having air conditioning has become essential to sustaining human life. In 2023 there were over sixty (60) emergency department and urgent care complaints of heat related illness in Charles County alone. With climate change getting progressively worse each year, the need for air conditioning will become more essential.

I urge the committee to vote in-favor of HB 1295, in order to not only ensure all Maryland renters are able to live in a sustainable home that has working air conditioning, but to also have standards that will regulate what is considered working order.

Respectfully,

Carlos Childs