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March 1, 2024

To: The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Kira Wilpone-Welborn, Assistant Attorney General
Consumer Protection Division

Re: House Bill 1295 – Real Property - Residential Rental Apartments - Air-Conditioning
Requirements (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General (the “Division”) supports House Bill 1295 sponsored by Delegates Lehman, Allen, Foley, Harris, Pena-Melnyk, Phillips, Ruth, Solomon, Stein, Stewart, Taveras, Taylor, Terrasa, and Ziegler. House Bill 1295 would require newly constructed residential rental units to provide air conditioning from June to October. And would expand requirements to provide air conditioning from June to October to existing residential rental units only after those units undergo voluntary renovations.

Landlord-tenant complaints are consistently among the top complaints received each year by the Division, including complaints about when and if landlords are required to provide air conditioning to renters. Presently, Maryland landlords are not required to provide access to air conditioning in rental units as they are required to provide heat in cold weather months. As excessive and prolonged heat waves proliferate, access to air conditioning provides important protections to our most vulnerable populations, including the elderly and young children.¹ House Bill 1295 provides reasonable steps to expand access to air conditioning in rental units as our climate warms, and would assist the Division in mediating consumer complaints.

¹ See R. Sari Kovats and Shakoor Hajat, “Heat Stress and Public Health: A Critical Review,” Annual Review of Public Health 2008 29:1, 41-55 at 48 (“U.S. studies indicate that air conditioning is an important protective factor for heat-related mortality...Lack of air conditioning may explain the risk of heat stroke in poor urban elderly persons in some U.S. inner cities...”, available here:
<https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.publhealth.29.020907.090843>).

Accordingly, the Division requests that the Environment and Transportation Committee give House Bill 1295 a favorable report.

cc: The Honorable Mary A. Lehman, *et. al.*
Members, Environment and Transportation Committee