



Senate Bill 856 Maryland Tenant Mold Protection Act.

House Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: Favorable

Hearing 3/20/25

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR) supports SB856 for the purpose of making sure that tenants have the right to request mold assessment and remediation from their landlord when they suspect there is mold in their housing. In addition, this bill requires landlords to provide tenants with information about mold and what they can do to prevent it.

CPSR is statewide evidenced-based, organization of over 900 physicians, medical students, other health professionals and supporters, that addresses the existential public health threats: nuclear weapons, the climate crisis and the issues of pollution and toxics' effect on health as seen through the intersectional lens of environmental, social and racial justice. As an organization founded by physicians, we understand that prevention is far superior to treatment in reducing costs, illness, injury, and suffering. Indoor mold is a contributor to preventable respiratory illnesses, for which reason we support SB856 because it represents an important way for tenants who suspect mold in rental properties to have a remedy to make sure landlords address mold problems in a timely fashion.

Water, dirt and dust are important ingredients for the growth of microorganisms, including fungi, actinomycetes and other bacteria. Dampness maybe the most important. Excessive moisture and poor ventilation promote the growth of microorganisms indoors. This growth allows for the production of toxic material produced by the microorganisms that are an additional contributor to health effects including the increased risk of respiratory symptoms, respiratory infections, allergies, immune reactions and exacerbation of asthma.<sup>1</sup> Some studies have suggested a relationship between exposure to mold and the development of asthma<sup>2</sup> in susceptible children. In addition, those who are allergic, immune suppressed and those with chronic lung disease are

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<sup>1</sup> <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/164348/9789289041683-eng.pdf>

all at higher risk of infection from mold. Dampness and mold may be particularly prevalent in poorly maintained housing for low-income people and thus it becomes an important equity issue. We know that housing is an important social determinant of health. In addition, minority families, often in low-income neighborhoods with reduced quality housing, have a higher incidence of asthma<sup>3</sup> and the presence of mold may be one factor that contributes to this link. Increased heat and moisture promote mold growth, so we are likely to see mold become a greater problem with this change in our climate.

SB856 would allow tenants to become informed about mold, how to prevent it, as well as have the right to have an assessment and then remediation within a timely fashion if mold is suspected and then detected.

As a former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development said several years ago in a visit to Maryland: “Children should never have to live in a place where they cannot breathe. When we transform houses, we transform people.”<sup>4</sup>

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility supports the rights for tenants to live in healthy homes including housing that is free of health-harming molds and are member of the Renters United Maryland, a statewide coalition of renters, organizers, and advocates. **We urge the Committee’s report of Favorable on SB856**

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/mold/faqs.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4210655/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2022/01/24/feds-direct-millions-to-reduce-lead-and-asthma-triggers-in-low-income-homes-in-md/>

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