

March 24, 2025

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **HB1367 - SUPPORT** – Lead Testing and Inspections – Falsifying Information - Penalty

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committees:

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) writes in support of House Bill 1367. I serve as Chair of the Maryland Lead Poisoning Prevention Commission and as a member of the EPA Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee and the CDC Lead Exposure and Prevention Advisory Committee. GHHI has a long-standing history of advocating for families and children on the important issue of lead poisoning prevention and addressing healthy homes hazards. GHHI has been at the frontline of lead poisoning prevention for over three decades in helping to elevate Maryland as a national leader by working to reduce childhood lead poisoning by 99% in the state. GHHI also provides tenant's rights assistance statewide and legal representation of tenants for the repair of lead hazards and other hazardous conditions in homes.

In 2012, the CDC determined that there is no safe level of lead in a child's body at which harm does not occur. Lead poisoning causes learning disabilities, loss of IQ, speech development problems, attention deficit disorder, higher school dropout rates and violent, aggressive behavior that disproportionately impacts older, low-income communities in Maryland. Despite our progress, Maryland annually still has over 1,300 children identified with elevated blood lead levels.

The Maryland Reduction of Lead Risk in Housing Law relies on the validity of the private inspection process in order for the law to be effective. Our children, parents and families depend on it. If lead inspectors are permitted to falsify inspection records, sampling results and lead certifications, the whole system unravels.

HB1367 will address this problem by imposing civil penalties on inspectors who knowingly falsify certificates to demonstrate compliance with Maryland environmental regulatory requirements. Civil fines are needed for inspectors who falsify inspection certification information to serve as a deterrent to that unlawful and illegal behavior. Strong oversight and enforcement is critical to protecting the integrity of the lead inspection certification system in the Maryland's lead laws.

The Maryland Department of the Environment has played a leading governmental role in implementing the law. Without substantial enforcement and accountability measures, the underpinnings of environmental laws and the balances struck in those laws will be greatly compromised. GHHI applauds MDE for taking its recent enforcement actions against inspection companies that are not following the required State of Maryland lead inspection protocols or falsifying inspection documents. It is important that MDE has sufficient staffing resources and the legal authority needed through civil penalties to have consequences for inspectors and their companies when MDE spot checks and oversight uncovers fraudulent activities.

GHHI supports HB1367 and the creation of strong civil fines for inspectors who engage in unlawful actions. These civil fines must be significant enough to deter future inspectors from being willing to place monetary gain over the undermining of Maryland's lead laws and the placing of young children and pregnant women at risk. While Maryland Environment Article Section 6-850 does contain civil fines currently, HB1367 is needed to address a loophole in the current statute that only imposes those civil fines on the rental property owner. HB1367 will address this deficiency by also imposing civil fines on the lead inspector who engages in the prohibited conduct.

Lead inspectors who falsify lead inspections and certifications are deceiving unsuspecting parents into thinking the homes they are moving their families into are safe. These fraudulent certificates put rental homes that contain lead hazards and are out of compliance with Maryland's Risk Reduction Certification standards on the market. This legislation will establish important civil penalties for inspectors who are falsifying lead inspection results and certificates and undermining the integrity of the Maryland Reduction of Lead Risk in Housing Law.

We request a Favorable Report on HB1367.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ruth Ann Norton', written in a cursive style.

Ruth Ann Norton  
President and CEO