



TESTIMONY FOR HB0153 Real Property - Residential Rental Apartments – Air-Conditioning Requirements

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Lehman

Committee: Economic Matters

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0153 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Compared to earlier iterations of this legislation, HB0153 can be a game-changer, significantly expanding access to adequate cooling for more Maryland residents. This bill mandates air conditioning in newly constructed residential rental units starting June 1, 2026, and in existing units that undergo alterations starting October 1, 2025. It requires landlords to provide air conditioning in line with specific temperature standards set by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) Standard 552.

Maryland is already grappling with the effects of climate change, with temperatures soaring higher than ever. The average annual temperature in the state has risen nearly 4 degrees Fahrenheit above the average between 1895-1915. Both day and nighttime temperatures are on the rise. From 1970 to 2016, the number of days over 95 degrees Fahrenheit increased by 3.7 days. The number of nights with temperatures above 75 degrees Fahrenheit went from 2 per year in 1950 to 7 per year in 2019. The days with a heat index above 105 degrees Fahrenheit have also surged, and more heatwaves are anticipated.

With global warming cranking up the planet's thermostat, air conditioning has shifted from a luxury to an absolute necessity for our members. As temperatures climb and heatwaves become more frequent and intense, staying cool isn't just about comfort—it's about survival. Extreme heat stresses our bodies, leading to dehydration, heat exhaustion, and even life-threatening heatstroke. For many people, especially the elderly, young children, and those with health conditions, a cool environment can literally be a lifesaver.

But it's not just individual health at stake. Air conditioning keeps our daily lives on track. Imagine trying to work, study, or even sleep when it's sweltering—you can't focus, productivity plummets, and everything feels ten times harder. By maintaining comfortable indoor temperatures, we can stay productive and keep our sanity when the world outside feels like an oven.

There's also the air quality angle. Global warming doesn't just heat things up; it can worsen air pollution and increase allergens. Modern AC systems help filter out pollutants and allergens, giving us cleaner air to breathe indoors. That's a big deal, especially in urban areas where smog can be a real problem.

When it comes to the carbon footprint, modern air conditioning units prioritize energy efficiency and sustainability. Innovations like variable-speed compressors and inverter technology allow the units to adjust their cooling output precisely to renters' needs, rather than operating at a constant, inefficient full speed. Smart thermostats and Wi-Fi-enabled controls enable renters to control their systems remotely via smartphones or voice assistants, set schedules, and receive maintenance alerts.

The Maryland Legislative Coalition steadfastly supports this bill and similar initiatives that help mitigate the impact of global climate change.