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January 30, 2026

Senator Brian J. Feldman  
Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: **SB203 – FAVORABLE** - Environment - Lead Paint Abatement Services -  
Performance Bond and Liability Insurance

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) writes in support of Senate Bill 203. GHHI has been at the frontline of lead poisoning prevention for over three decades by helping to elevate Maryland as a national leader and working to reduce childhood lead poisoning by 99% in our state. GHHI also provides tenants' rights assistance, rental property owner compliance assistance and legal representation of tenants statewide for the repair of lead hazards and other hazardous conditions in homes throughout Maryland. Furthermore, in addition to serving as the President and CEO of GHHI, I also serve as the Chair of the Maryland Lead Poisoning Prevention Commission and lead nationwide efforts on combatting the harmful effects of lead in housing.

Lead poisoning from primarily lead in paint, dust and contaminated soil contributes to significant learning disabilities, loss of IQ, speech development problems, attention deficit disorder, poor school performance and violent, aggressive behavior that heavily burdens low-income communities. Lead poisoning directly contributes to the cycle of learning disabilities, poor school performance, steep school dropout rates and juvenile delinquency that prevent low-income children in particular in Maryland from being able to thrive and which burdens the State through increased special education and criminal justice costs. Children poisoned by lead are 7 times more likely to drop out of school and 6 times more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system.

On October 3, 2025 in the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, Rodney Bryan Barkley plead guilty to four counts of Falsifying a Lead Paint Risk Reduction Certificate and one count of Operating a Radiation Machine Without Obtaining a License (Case Number: C-24-CR-25-002915). In addition, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) suspended Barkley's accreditation as a lead-certified inspector and has officially invalidated 1,400 lead certificates he had previously issued.

During the 2025 Maryland General Assembly, the legislature passed HB1367, which revised Maryland Environment Article § 6-850(c) so that "[a] person who falsifies information that is

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submitted in a report under . . . this subtitle is liable for a civil penalty not exceeding \$50,000, to be collected in a civil action.” This was intended as a first-line remedy so that tenants and owners who had been harmed by inspectors like Barkley would see that legal consequences are being imposed on those lead inspectors or contractors who harmed them and undermined the integrity of the law. HB1367 imposed civil penalties on inspectors who knowingly falsify certificates to demonstrate compliance with Maryland environmental regulatory requirements. These penalties were needed for inspectors and contractors who falsify inspection certification information to serve as a deterrent to that unlawful and illegal behavior.

However, there is no current requirement that lead inspectors or contractors be insured or bonded to be certified by MDE to conduct lead inspections or lead hazard remediation work. Tenants and property owners who experience harm from inspectors who submit falsified lead reports or lead contractors who fail to use lead safe work practices and are not insured or bonded would not have any meaningful civil recourse against inspectors or contractors that have no insurance, limited assets or are effectively insolvent. SB203 would address that issue and better protect tenants, occupants and property owners by ensuring that every lead inspector and lead contractor who is certified by MDE has some reasonable form of insurance or bonding.

This legislation is necessary so that tenants and rental property owners who have damages due to falsified inspection reports by bad actors or lead exposure from improper contractor work have greater protections. Requiring a reasonable level of insurance would ensure that tenants and owners have an ability to recover costs for a lead inspector or lead contractor who operates in a fraudulent or unsafe manner.

For these reasons, we request a Favorable Report on SB203.

Respectfully Submitted,

Signed by:  
  
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Ruth Ann Norton  
President and CEO