



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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February 12, 2026

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

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of Senate Bill 0012: Residential Rental Apartments - Air-Conditioning Requirement**

Chair Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

Everyone deserves the dignity of a safe, stable home, no matter your age, income or background. Through our Office of Consumer Protection (OCP), we protect consumers and tenants by mediating disputes, taking enforcement action and by providing tips on how to make smart purchasing decisions.

I want to thank Speaker Pena-Melnyk, as well as Delegates Lehman, Ruth, Stewart, and Terrasa for leading with this legislation. SB12 seeks to require air-conditioning in all new rental residential units constructed or substantially renovated in Maryland. This addition would be valuable to the tenants of Howard County as the State's law currently only mandates heat in rental housing, leaving a patchwork quilt of counties and municipalities which have opted to add air conditioning as a requirement locally.

During the summer of 2024, Howard County residents experienced a particularly distressing and dangerous situation when a high-rise apartment complex in Columbia suffered an unplanned outage of its air conditioning system for a number of weeks during a 100+ degree heat wave. Given the severity of the issue, which persisted without resolution from the apartment complex, our OCP fielded 14 complaints and inquiries from tenants. Tenants told us that they had sent their children away to live with family as their home was unsafe. Others had to leave due to exacerbated health conditions. While OCP was able to secure portable air conditioning units or other financial relief from the landlord on behalf of residents as a result of this situation, far too many Maryland tenants have no recourse.

As we see more intensity of our summer heat, our residents need reliable cooling systems to be safe, healthy and comfortable. This bill would mandate such systems in new rental housing or where a property owner has made a substantial investment to improve an existing property. This bill presents a logical step toward providing all Marylanders with basic housing security.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to issue a **favorable report** on **Senate Bill 0012**.

Respectfully,

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