

SB12

Uploaded by: Calvin Ball

Position: FAV



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,

Calvin Ball



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Howard County Executive

Testimony SB12.pdf

Uploaded by: Christopher West

Position: FAV

CHRIS WEST
Legislative District 42
Baltimore and Carroll Counties

Judicial Proceedings Committee



Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 12, 2026

The Maryland State Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 12 – Residential Rental Apartments – Air-Conditioning Requirement

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The premise of this bill is very simple ... that it gets really, really hot in Maryland in the summer and that living without air conditioning in such conditions can actually be dangerous. This bill presumes that a rented residence without air conditioning should be just as unacceptable as a rental without heat or water or indoor plumbing. Given the extreme summer heat in Maryland, our citizens who live in rentals should be provided with decent air conditioning.

This bill would require residential rental units in newly built large, multi-family apartment buildings to have air conditioning sufficient to cool the apartments down to at least 80 degrees. This would also extend to existing apartment buildings that undergo the complete replacement or substantial upgrading of their electrical systems or heating systems. In other words, if the landlord is going to spend a lot of money upgrading an existing building, the installation of air conditioning should be a part of the project.

Last year, an earlier version of this bill was introduced by Delegate Lehman in the House and passed that body overwhelmingly, but it was opposed by the various organizations representing landlords. Their opposition was not based upon the basic thrust of the bill but was based upon the fact that the bill required that Maryland adopt standards promulgated by a national organization. This year, that requirement has been deleted from the bill. Instead, the bill merely invokes the 80-degree requirement, something that is easily measurable with a standard thermometer.

Also, last year the City of Baltimore was concerned that the bill would apply to a number of very old, City-owned public housing structures with electrical systems not capable of accommodating building-wide air conditioning. Language in this year's bill has been added exempting buildings falling into that category.

CHRIS WEST
Legislative District 42
Baltimore and Carroll Counties

Judicial Proceedings Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

So, I believe that Senate Bill 12 has successfully obviated the objections that were encountered last year and that this bill will be acceptable all around. Let's all agree that in this day and age, our citizens, whatever their income class, should be able to live in relative comfort during those summer heat waves and not bake and sweat in intolerable heat.

I also should point out that this bill has no fiscal note.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of Senate Bill 12 and will be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

Carrington 2025 CPSR testimony for SB12 air condit

Uploaded by: Darrell Carrington

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY — Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
SB 12 — Residential Rental Apartments — Air-Conditioning Requirement**

**POSITION: SUPPORT WITH POLICY CONTEXT FROM A PUBLIC
HEALTH AND EQUITY LENS**

Good afternoon Chair and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 12, a bill that would require landlords to provide air-conditioning in qualifying residential rental units beginning in June and October of 2026. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility, a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting human health and climate stability throughout Maryland.

At its core, SB 12 responds to a reality that is increasingly evident across the state: extreme heat is a growing public health risk, and it is not distributed evenly. Rising temperatures driven by climate change hit our most vulnerable populations hardest, including children, older adults, and individuals with chronic health conditions. Heat-related stress, heat exhaustion, and elevated indoor temperatures are closely linked to adverse health outcomes that spill into every aspect of a person's life, including their ability to work, sleep, and participate fully in community and school life.

The provision of adequate air conditioning in residential settings is more than a comfort issue. It is a public health issue with direct implications for heat-related illness prevention and mitigation. Children living in homes without consistent cooling are more likely to experience fatigue, dehydration, interrupted sleep, and impaired cognitive function, all of which translate into poorer outcomes at school and in daily life. Ensuring that rental housing meets basic cooling standards during high-heat months aligns with the fundamental principle that public policy should promote conditions where people can be healthy in the places where they live.

From an equity standpoint, renters are disproportionately lower-income and people of color who have fewer resources to adapt to heat stress compared to homeowners with more control over their built environment. A requirement that landlords provide and maintain effective air-conditioning systems helps reduce disparities in heat exposure and supports healthier living conditions for all Maryland residents.

We encourage the Committee to support SB 12 and to view it through a lens that recognizes climate adaptation as a health imperative. Strengthening housing standards in the face of increasing heat events is consistent with a broader strategy to reduce climate vulnerabilities and protect the most vulnerable among us. At the same time, we recognize the importance of implementation considerations, and urge the Committee to consider supports or incentives that would help landlords make necessary upgrades without unintended negative impacts on housing affordability.

Thank you for your consideration and we respectfully request a favorable report.

Submitted by Darrell Carrington - Carrington & Associates, LLC on behalf of Dr. Gwen DuBois, M.D., MPH - President Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR) - Faculty John Hopkins University – for more information please contact Dr. DuBois at gdubois@jhsphe.edu.

SB12

Uploaded by: Emily Benson

Position: FAV



Testimony of the Mayor and Council of Rockville SB 12 – Residential Rental Apartments – Air-Conditioning Requirement Support

The Mayor and Council of Rockville are thankful to Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee for the opportunity to provide written comments in support of SB 12. We thank Senator West for sponsoring this important legislation.

The Mayor and Council support this legislation, which aligns with our housing priority to improve living conditions for renters. SB 12 requires a landlord of residential units in apartment buildings with four or more individual dwelling units to provide air conditioning from June 1 through September 30 each year. Landlords are to provide air conditioning in residential rental units beginning June 1, 2026, for newly constructed units and starting on October 1, 2026, for existing units that undergo renovation that includes the replacement or substantial upgrade of electrical systems or heating systems.

In Rockville, approximately 47% of our residents are renters. Ensuring that all of our renters have air conditioning is critically important to the health and safety of our residents. The impacts of climate change are causing average summer temperatures to rise. According to Montgomery County, average annual temperatures are projected to increase significantly, and the greatest changes will occur in the summer and fall.

A lack of a working air conditioning unit or system in an apartment can become a life-threatening issue in the summer months. Our residents have expressed concerns about timely repairs to air conditioning in their apartments. Additionally, others have noted the urgent need for a requirement that all residential units in Rockville have adequate air conditioning systems, and as such is an action we are working to move forward on.

SB 12 takes an important step forward by requiring air conditioning in all rental units in Maryland. With a housing shortage and an affordability crisis in the State, many residents are forced to live in rentals. All residents in our community and across the State must have working air conditioning in their units. SB 12 provides safeguards that protect public health, support equity, and improve the quality of life of our rental community. For these reasons, we urge the Committee to provide SB 12 with a favorable report.

SB12 Residential Rental Apartments-AC

Uploaded by: Jonathon Rondeau

Position: FAV

January 20, 2026

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

RE: SB12/HB153 – Residential Rental Apartments – Air–Conditioning Requirement

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Fello, we write in support of ***SB12/HB153 – Residential Rental Apartments – Air–Conditioning Requirement***.

Across Maryland, Fello is building communities where people belong. With a team of more than 600 employees, Fello supports over 5,000 people with disabilities each year—creating opportunities that empower people to live the lives they choose. From advancing equity and respect to expanding access and connection, inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. One powerful way this comes to life is through Fello Communities: beautiful, safe, and accessible rental housing that offers choice and stability for residents across income levels, from affordable to market-rate homes.

SB12/HB152, requiring landlords to provide air conditioning in residential buildings with four or more units, establishes a modern housing standard that addresses public health and climate realities. With extreme heat events becoming more frequent, access to reliable cooling is essential to protect tenant health and safety, particularly for vulnerable populations. Clear standards for installation, repair timelines, and landlord responsibility ensure consistent access, prevent unsafe delays, and reduce disputes, while creating uniform expectations for property owners statewide.

Making air conditioning a required feature in multifamily buildings is both feasible and practical. This policy improves living conditions, reduces heat-related health emergencies, supports housing stability, and advances equity.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB12/HB153.

Sincerely,



Jonathon Rondeau
President & CEO

mobile: 410.591.3600

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SB 12_Consumer Protection Division_Favorable_FINAL

Uploaded by: Kira Wilpone-Welborn

Position: FAV

CAROLYN A. QUATTROCKI
Chief Deputy Attorney General

LEONARD J. HOWIE III
Deputy Attorney General

CARRIE J. WILLIAMS
Deputy Attorney General

SHARON S. MERRIWEATHER
Deputy Attorney General

ZENITA WICKHAM HURLEY
Deputy Attorney General



**STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION
HOUSING UNIT**

ANTHONY G. BROWN
Attorney General

WILLIAM D. GRUHN
Division Chief

KAREN M. VALENTINE
Deputy Division Chief

PETER V. BERNIS
General Counsel

CHRISTIAN E. BARRERA
Chief Operating Officer

KIRA WILPONE-WELBORN
Unit Chief

January 16, 2026

To: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Kira Wilpone-Welborn, Assistant Attorney General
Consumer Protection Division

Re: Senate Bill 12 –Residential Rental Apartments - Air-Conditioning Requirement
(SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General (the “Division”) supports Senate Bill 12 sponsored by Senator Chris West. Senate Bill 12 would (a) require newly constructed residential rental units to provide air conditioning from June to October and (b) expand requirements to provide air conditioning from June to October to existing residential rental units only after those units undergo voluntary renovations.

Landlord-tenant complaints are consistently among the top complaints received each year by the Division, including complaints about when and if landlords are required to provide air conditioning to renters. Presently, Maryland landlords are not required to provide access to air conditioning in rental units like they are required to provide heat in cold weather months. As excessive and prolonged heat waves proliferate, access to air conditioning provides important protections to our most vulnerable populations, including the elderly and young children.¹ Senate Bill 12 provides reasonable steps to expand access to air conditioning in rental units as our climate warms, and would assist the Division in mediating consumer complaints concerning apartments that are excessively hot during the summer.

¹ See R. Sari Kovats and Shakoor Hajat, “Heat Stress and Public Health: A Critical Review,” Annual Review of Public Health 2008 29:1, 41-55 at 48 (“U.S. studies indicate that air conditioning is an important protective factor for heat-related mortality...Lack of air conditioning may explain the risk of heat stroke in poor urban elderly persons in some U.S. inner cities...”, available here: <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.publhealth.29.020907.090843>).

Accordingly, the Division requests that the Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 12 a favorable report.

cc: The Honorable Chris West
Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee

MBIA Letter of Support SB12.pdf

Uploaded by: Lori Graf

Position: FAV

January 20, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE Letter of Support SB12 Residential Rental Apartments - Air-Conditioning Requirement

Dear Chair Smith,

The Maryland Building Industry Association, representing 100,000 employees of the building industry across the State of Maryland, appreciates the opportunity to participate in the discussion surrounding Senate Bill 12 Residential Rental Apartments - Air-Conditioning Requirement. MBIA supports this measure in its current posture.

The bill requires a landlord to provide air-conditioning to certain residential rental units in a certain manner beginning June 1, 2026, for newly constructed residential rental units and beginning October 1, 2026, for residential rental units that undergo substantial renovations.

The bill establishes a clear, enforceable performance standard—a maximum indoor temperature of 80 degrees Fahrenheit during the summer season—while recognizing operational realities. It appropriately distinguishes between landlord-controlled and tenant-controlled systems and allows flexibility for reasonable maintenance and repair. This clarity benefits tenants, landlords, and enforcement agencies alike.

From a housing quality and equity perspective, this legislation ensures that access to safe indoor temperatures is not limited to newer luxury housing but becomes a consistent baseline expectation across the rental market over time.

For these reasons, we respectfully request the Committee give this measure a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

For more information about this position, please contact Lori Graf at 410-800-7327 or lgraf@marylandbuilders.org.

cc: Members of the Senate JPR Committee

SB12

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV



Live the life you want.

From: Ronza Othman, President
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
15 Charles Plaza, #3002
Baltimore, MD 21201 president@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to give a favorable report with amendment to SB0012. This bill requires newly constructed or substantially renovated multi-unit rental properties to include air conditioning.

Seniors, people with disabilities, and those with chronic health conditions will benefit most from this bill, because they will have access to reliable cooling during extreme weather. Given that extreme heat exacerbates many medical conditions, air conditioning is not a luxury, but a public health necessity.

Nonetheless, we are respectfully requesting that this bill be amended to add a provision that would require *any air-conditioning system installed or upgraded under this bill include thermostats or control mechanisms that are nonvisually accessible to blind users, either through accessible physical controls or through a smartphone or other digital interface that is compatible with commonly used screen-reading software.*

Modern HVAC systems increasingly rely on **touchscreen thermostats, flat-panel controls, or visual-only interfaces** that provide little or no audible or tactile feedback. These systems often:

- Lack physical buttons or discernible Braille or tactile markings.
- Require interaction with visual menus or icons.
- Are inaccessible to screen readers, such as VoiceOver for the iPhone and TalkBack for Android devices, when paired with mobile applications.

As a result, blind tenants may be **unable to adjust the temperature**, confirm system status, or respond to heat-related emergencies without assistance from a sighted person. This loss of independence undermines the very protection that House Bill 153 seeks to establish, since it prevents tenants from independently controlling the temperature of their units.

House Bill 153 already ties air-conditioning requirements to **new construction and substantial renovations**. This makes it the *ideal moment* to ensure accessibility, because:

- Accessible thermostats and controls are **widely available and cost-comparable**.
- Accessibility can be achieved **without altering the overall HVAC design**.
- Retrofitting later is far more expensive and disruptive than building accessibility in from the moment of installation.

Importantly, this amendment would not require a single specific technology. Accessibility can be achieved **either directly on the thermostat itself** (e.g., tactile controls, speech output) **or through a fully accessible smartphone application** that works with screen-reading software, which provides either verbal feedback or Braille output through a connected refreshable Braille display.

For those reasons, we ask for a favorable report with amendment on SB0012. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.

SB12_TimHoang_Fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Tim Hoang

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY
Maryland General Assembly
Environmental and Transportation Committee
In Favor of SB12—Residential Rental Apartments – Air–Conditioning Requirement
Tim Hoang 415-964-1105



January 15, 2026

Good afternoon, Chairman Smith and Vice Chair Waldstreicher and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Tim Hoang, and I am representing the Montgomery County Renters Alliance in support of SB12. The Renters Alliance thanks Senator Chris West as well as Delegate Mary Lehman for laying the groundwork for this important legislation that will protect tenants from ever rising heat and climate change.

SB12 requires new construction of buildings with at least 4 units to provide tenants with air conditioning. As record high temperatures become increasingly more common, we need to protect our tenants, many of whom are elderly, disabled, or children. Without air conditioning, we are seeing increased risk of heat stroke, decreased worker productivity, and lagging academic performance. It is brutal trying to cook or sleep when the temperature is over 80 degrees inside.

Montgomery County passed similar legislation in 2020 with the desired result of protecting renters. Heating is already mandated in the winter months and now it is time for air conditioning to be considered a standard as well. We cannot ignore the effects of climate change causing more extreme temperatures. The Renters Alliance urges a favorable report on this important bipartisan supported legislation.

Thank you,
Tim Hoang
5461 Marlin st.
Rockville, MD

SB 12 PJC FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Matt Hill

Position: FWA



C. Matthew Hill
Attorney
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SB 12 - Residential Rental Apartments - Air-Conditioning Requirements

Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee on Jan. 20, 2026

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a nonprofit public interest law firm that stands with tenants to protect and expand their rights to safe, habitable, affordable, and non-discriminatory housing and their rights to fair and equal treatment by Maryland's landlord-tenant laws, courts, and agencies. We represent or advise over 800 renter households each year, and we advocate to change laws that further a human right to house.

SB 12 is an important step to ensuring Maryland renters have a safe home. Currently in Maryland, air conditioning is not considered essential to life, health, and safety under Maryland's escrow law in most circumstances and is not a required feature that landlords must offer. This puts the health of thousands of renters, particularly older adults, tenants with disabilities and children, unnecessarily at risk.¹

In Baltimore City, where most of Public Justice Center's clients reside, there is minimal tree cover and green spaces. In that environment higher temperatures create a deadly situation for those who do not have air conditioning. Because there is no requirement to provide air conditioning generally, approximately 55% of Baltimore households have no guarantee that their homes will protect them from hazardous summer heat. We have left many tenants throughout the state open and exposed to heat-related illnesses and complications. While SB 12 will not address the need for air conditioning in properties that are not new or undergoing substantial rehabilitation, it will ensure going forward that any apartments built or rehabbed in Maryland will have air conditioning. Particularly in light of climate change and global warming, the need to ensure that Maryland's renting families have some protection from heat stroke and other health risks due to heat has never been greater.

We are concerned that the 80-degree maximum temperature provided for in the bill is far too high, particularly for senior citizens and other medically vulnerable residents. We are also concerned that this bill unreasonably exempts the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, which has numerous families in significant need of air conditioning for their health and safety. We believe that this bill sets the legal floor for air conditioning, and that local jurisdictions may impose more stringent requirements, including

¹ See, e.g., <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/the-dangers-of-extreme-heat/> ; https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/pubs/extreme-heat-final_508.pdf; <https://www.weather.gov/ffc/heat2>

lowering the maximum temperature in county or city code. To be certain, we request an amendment clarifying that local jurisdictions may pass legislation that exceeds the tenant protections provided for in SB 12. We will provide such language to the sponsor of the bill.

Public Justice Center asks that the Committee **issue a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS report on SB 12.**

SB0012-JPR-SWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FWA



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB0012/HB0153

January 20, 2026

TO: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: Senate Bill 12 – Residential Rental Apartments - Air-Conditioning Requirement

POSITION: Support with Amendment

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports with amendment** Senate Bill 12.

This bill would require landlords to provide air-conditioning to residential buildings with four or more units during the months of June through September. The bill excludes buildings located on property listed on the national register of historic places; that are part of a Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) development built between 1940 and 1950; or a rowhouse public housing unit acquired and rehabilitated by the HABC between 1960 and 1997. The BCA recommends the following amendments: (1) removing the provision that would exclude buildings located on property listed on the national register of historic places and (2) removing the provisions that establish a rollout period for buildings that are newly constructed or renovated. Without these amendments, much of Baltimore City would be excluded (in the case of buildings located in national historic districts) and all buildings that are not newly constructed or renovated would be excluded. Rental housing in historic buildings makes up a large percentage of Baltimore City's housing stock. The BCA wants this important bill to benefit as many people as possible.

2025 had record-setting high temperatures in Baltimore City, with the heat index reaching 114 degrees Fahrenheit at one point in June. Between 2018 and 2025, the Maryland Department of Health reported that there were 43 heat-related deaths in Baltimore City. This number is expected to grow as climate change progresses and temperatures become more extreme. These deaths are preventable.

National data show that people without air conditioning are among those most at risk.ⁱ Vulnerable populations include infants, young children, and individuals who are pregnant, among others. Because their body is working to cool down both the pregnant person and the developing baby, pregnancy can make a person more likely to get heat exhaustion, heat stroke, or other heat-related illness sooner than those who are not pregnant.ⁱⁱ The stress from extreme heat then leads to increased gestational diabetes, high blood pressure in pregnancy, and premature rupture of membranes.ⁱⁱⁱ When temperatures are high, there are increased rates of stillbirth, preterm birth, and low birth weight babies. Preterm birth and low birth weight are both linked to cardiovascular disease and diabetes in adulthood.ⁱⁱⁱ Infants and young children are particularly vulnerable to extreme heat because their smaller bodies heat up more quickly, and they have less capacity to release heat via sweating. Additionally, young children rely on others for cooling.^{iv}

This bill will protect our vulnerable constituents from immediate threats and mitigate the significant cost associated with increased suffering and illness. For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable with amendment** report on SB 12.

Recommended amendments:

Page 1:

17 (2) THIS SECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO A RESIDENTIAL RENTAL UNIT
18 THAT IS:

19 ~~(1) LOCATED ON PROPERTY LISTED ON THE NATIONAL~~
20 ~~REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES;~~

Page 2:

6 (B) A LANDLORD SHALL PROVIDE AIR-CONDITIONING IN EACH
7 RESIDENTIAL UNIT IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION ~~AS~~
8 ~~FOLLOWS:~~

9 ~~(1) BEGINNING JUNE 1, 2026, FOR NEWLY CONSTRUCTED~~
10 ~~RESIDENTIAL RENTAL UNITS; AND~~

11 ~~(2) BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2026, FOR RESIDENTIAL RENTAL UNITS~~
12 ~~THAT UNDERGO RENOVATION THAT INCLUDES THE REPLACEMENT OR SUBSTANTIAL~~
13 ~~UPGRADE OF ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS OR HEATING SYSTEMS.~~

ⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/extreme-heat/risk-factors/index.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/heat-health/risk-factors/heat-and-pregnancy.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ebi KL, Capon A, Berry P, et al. Hot weather and heat extremes: health risks. Lancet. Aug 21 2021;398(10301):698-708. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(21)01208-3 5. Tsuzuki-Hayakawa K, Tochiara Y, Ohnaka T. Thermoregulation during heat exposure of young children compared to their mothers. Eur J Appl Physiol Occup Physiol. 1995;72(1-2):12-7. doi:10.1007/BF0096410

^{iv} Ebi KL, Capon A, Berry P, et al. Hot weather and heat extremes: health risks. Lancet. Aug 21 2021;398(10301):698-708. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(21)01208-3 5. Tsuzuki-Hayakawa K, Tochiara Y, Ohnaka T. Thermoregulation during heat exposure of young children compared to their mothers. Eur J Appl Physiol Occup Physiol. 1995;72(1-2):12-7. doi:10.1007/BF0096410

SB0012 - Maryland Legal Aid - FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Zafar Shah

Position: FWA



SB0012 – Real Property - Residential Rental Apartments - Air-Conditioning Requirements
Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 20, 2026

Position: Favorable With Amendment

Maryland Legal Aid submits its written testimony on SB0012 at the request of the bill sponsor Senator Chris West.

Maryland Legal Aid is a non-profit law firm that provides free legal services to the State’s low-income and vulnerable residents. Our 12 offices serve residents in each of Maryland’s 24 jurisdictions and handle a range of civil legal matters, including for Marylanders struggling with housing insecurity. Maryland Legal Aid advocates for the right of low-income renters to live in safe housing. We support SB0012 with amendments.

SB0012 provides a targeted policy to tackle the increasingly dangerous heat hazards in apartment buildings that lack air conditioning. Its focus is on the future of multi-family rental housing across the state. SB0012 requires air conditioning only in apartment buildings of four or more units that are newly constructed or have been renovated. Renovation is defined in the bill as requiring “replacement or substantial upgrade” of electrical or heating systems. The bill

- *Temperature standard:* For properties covered by this bill, SB0012 requires provision of air conditioning capable of maintaining a temperature of 80°F or lower in each habitable space of the dwelling unit (e.g., not kitchens, bathrooms).
- *Seasonal requirement:* The provision of air conditioning would be required only seasonally, during the period of June 1 to September 30.
- *Exclusions:* The requirements of SB0012 do not apply to single-family rental properties, to properties registered in the National Register of Historic Places, and certain properties owned by the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC).

Maryland Legal Aid supports the intended impact of SB0012 but seeks amendments to remove the exemption of HABC properties.

Heat hazards are highest in market-rate multi-family housing.

A 2022 study demonstrated that “[m]arket-rate multifamily rental housing had, on average, the greatest overall heat risk, followed by subsidized multifamily rental housing, owner-occupied multifamily housing, and single-family housing.”¹ That study further showed that

- Access to central air conditioning “appeared to be the largest driver of disparities in heat risk among the housing types.”
- The average likelihood of not having central AC was 44.9% for single-family housing, 50.5% for subsidized multifamily rental housing, 52.4% for owner-occupied multifamily housing, and 73.7% for market-rate multifamily rental housing.
- Average land surface temperatures were 110.1 degrees for owner-occupied multifamily parcels, 111.4 for subsidized multifamily rental housing, 111.6 for single-family parcels, and 112.1 for market-rate multifamily rental parcels.²

Air conditioning is necessary to mitigate heat hazards.

Without the aid of air conditioning, urban rental housing stock is inadequate and unsafe. Unmitigated extreme heat endangers older adults, young children, and people with health conditions ranging from asthma to cardiovascular disease.³ Extreme heat predominantly impacts urban residents. For instance, in Baltimore City, the “[a]verage annual temperatures... have gone up more than 3 degrees over the last century, nearly twice as much as the rest of the country.”⁴

Baltimore City exemplifies how urban heat zones disparately impact low-income residents and residents of color.⁵ According to a recent analysis of U.S. census data and air temperature data, Baltimore’s hottest areas tend to be the poorest and can differ by as much as 10 degrees from the

¹ National Low Income Housing Coalition, “Study Finds Households in Multifamily Rental Housing Face Greatest Heat Risk,” Aug 08, 2022, <https://nlihc.org/resource/study-finds-households-multifamily-rental-housing-face-greatest-heat-risk>; C. J. Gabbe et al., “Housing and Urban Heat: Assessing Risk Disparities,” Housing Policy Debate (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2022.2093938>.

² *Id.*

³ Harvard Chan School of Public Health, “Health-harming extreme heat, driven by climate change, on the rise,” June 24, 2022, <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/health-harming-extreme-heat-driven-by-climate-change-on-the-rise>; see also *id.*, “The dangers of extreme heat,” July 26, 2022, <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/the-dangers-of-extreme-heat/>.

⁴ Ian Round et al., “In urban heat islands, climate crisis hits harder,” Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, Sept. 3, 2019, <https://cnsmaryland.org/interactives/summer-2019/code-red/neighborhood-heat-inequality.html>.

⁵ Meg Anderson, “As Rising Heat Bakes U.S. Cities, The Poor Often Feel It Most,” National Public Radio, Sept. 3, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/03/754044732/as-rising-heat-bakes-u-s-cities-the-poor-often-feel-it-most>.

coolest.⁶ Urban heat zones are also concentrated in formerly redlined sections of U.S. cities, including Baltimore.⁷

The bill should be amended to remove exemption of Baltimore City’s public housing stock.

Many of Maryland Legal Aid’s clients are residents of properties owned by the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC). They deserve protection from the health risks posed by heat hazards. At § 8-122(a)(2)(ii)-(iii), SB0012 excludes some HABC properties, and therefore its tenants, from meeting the air conditioning requirement. This exclusion applies to housing which comprise “part of a [HABC] development built between 1940 and 1950,” or “rowhouse public housing unit[s] acquired and rehabilitated by [HABC] between 1960 and 1997.” These exclusions do not appear supported by any public policy goals.

Based on HABC reporting,⁸ the following developments, totaling **4,561** rental units, fall into the 1940-1950 exception:

Development	Year Built	Unit Count	No Central AC
Brooklyn Homes	1942	482	X
Cherry Hill	1946	1281	X
Douglass Homes	1942	387	X
Gilmor Homes	1942	416	X
Latrobe Homes	1942	669	X
McCulloh Homes	1940	556	X
O’Donnell Heights	1942	230	X
Poe Homes	1941	288	X
Westport Homes	1942	200	X

These units excluded from SB0012 account for around 65% of all HABC units.

HABC has reported that these excluded residents may “purchase and install window air conditioner units within their dwelling units when central air conditioning does not exist.”⁹ This policy belies that HABC seeks to exclude properties that are capable of being air conditioned while the costs of

⁶ *Supra* note 2.

⁷ Meg Anderson, “Racist Housing Practices From The 1930s Linked To Hotter Neighborhoods Today,” National Public Radio, Jan. 14, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/01/14/795961381/racist-housing-practices-from-the-1930s-linked-to-hotter-neighborhoods-today> (“In a study of 108 urban areas nationwide, the formerly redlined neighborhoods of nearly every city studied were hotter than the non-redlined neighborhoods, some by nearly 13 degrees.”).

⁸ Housing Authority of Baltimore City, “Joint Committee Report,” March 6, 2024, https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/JCR/2023/2023_205-206.pdf.

⁹ *Id.*

window-unit air conditioning and energy inefficiency are externalized onto low-income, predominantly Black renters.

One of the 1940’s developments, Poe Homes, is slated in 2026 for demolition and replacement with 578 new mixed-income units, funded by HUD’s Choice Neighborhoods Initiative. Under the broad phrasing of the HABC exceptions in SB0012, the Poe Homes redevelopment would not need to comply with SB0012’s air conditioning requirement, despite reconstruction. That outcome would fly in the face of SB0012’s intent and conflict with HUD’s mandated energy efficiency requirements (including the ASHRAE 90.1-2019 standards) for new construction mid- and high-rise developments. In multiple ways, the HABC exceptions in this bill seem to lack a rationale that justifies the extreme harm they will cause to Baltimore City public housing residents.

SB0012 does not preempt local ordinances.

Montgomery County and Prince George’s County each have adopted local requirements on air conditioning for rental properties.¹⁰ Those local laws are similar to SB0012 in requiring certain rental properties to provide air conditioning between June 1 and September 30. These local laws use the 80°F-threshold temperature. Notably, the Prince George’s County law applies to all dwellings whereas SB0012 applies only to apartment buildings that are newly reconstructed or renovated. This table identifies the substantive similarities and differences between the two local laws and SB0012:

Feature	SB0012	Prince George’s Co. Ordinance	Montgomery Co. Regulation
Applicability	4+ unit buildings	All rental housing where landlord supplies AC	All rental housing
AC Requirement	Required in new/renovated units	Maintenance required if provided	Installation required within 30 days
Temperature Standard	≤80°F at 3 feet above floor	≤80°F at 3 feet above floor	≤80°F at 3 feet above floor
Time Period	June 1 – Sept. 30	June 1 – Sept. 30	June 1 – Sept. 30
Enforcement	None specified	Department, \$500 fines	Department, detailed procedures

Notably, as to preemption, “[a] local law does not ‘conflict’ with a State law... where local legislation simply requires more than State legislation.” *Board of County Commissioners of Washington County v. Perennial Solar, LLC*, 239 Md. App. 380, 400 (2018). The existing county laws on air conditioning require more and without conflict with the requirements of SB0012.

¹⁰ Montgomery County Code § 26-7; Prince George’s County § 13-162.02.

Overall, SB0012 would help to mitigate the dangerous impacts of extreme heat in our renter communities. Failure to address this environmental hazard exposes Maryland renters to continued risk of physical and other harms and perpetuates economic and racial disparities. For these reasons, **Maryland Legal Aid urges the Committee’s “favorable with amendments” report on SB0012.**

If you have any questions, please contact:

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AOBA Testimony

Uploaded by: Hugo Cantu

Position: INFO



Bill: SB12 - Real Property - Residential Rental Apartments - Air-Conditioning Requirements

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Date: January 20, 2026

Position: INFO

The Apartment and Office Building Association (AOBA) of Metropolitan Washington is a non-profit trade association representing the owners and managers of more than 23 million square feet of commercial office space and 133,000 apartment rental units in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. AOBA submits the following testimony on Senate Bill 12.

SB12 requires apartment building owners to provide air conditioning for new units and units undergoing HVAC system upgrades by June 1, 2026, and October 1, 2026, respectively. Both [Montgomery](#) and [Prince George Counties](#) have enacted legislation that requires units to have a temperature maximum of no more than 80°F. While the association represents buildings within Montgomery and Prince George's County, many of our members operate statewide. Standardizing this language from two jurisdictions that represent thousands of dwelling units will ease the burden of compliance.

However, AOBA urges members to consider an amendment to track heat-related deaths and their respective locations relating to single-family homes or multi-family properties. This language will provide the state with a closer look at where heat-related deaths are occurring.

Require the Maryland Department of Health to track the property type of where heat-related deaths occurred in the annual Heat-Related Illness Surveillance Summary Report. Property type such as:

- Single Family dwelling unit
- Multi-family dwelling unit

Please contact Hugo Cantu at hcantu@aoba-metro.org with any questions or concerns.

MMHA - 2026 - SB12 - INF.pdf

Uploaded by: Matthew Pipkin

Position: INFO



Senate Bill 12

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Bill: Senate Bill 12 Residential Rental Apartments - Air-Conditioning Requirement

Date: 1/20/26

Position: Informational

The Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA) is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members house more than 538,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA's membership consists of owners and managers of more than 210,000 rental housing homes in over 958 apartment communities and more than 250 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

Senate Bill 12 ("SB 12") requires a landlord to provide air-conditioning to residential rental units in apartment buildings with four or more individual dwelling units in a certain manner beginning June 1, 2026, for newly constructed residential rental units and beginning October 1, 2026, for residential rental units that undergo renovation that includes the replacement or substantial upgrade of electrical systems or heating systems.

In response to the air-conditioning related legislation that has been introduced at the state and local levels, MMHA conducted an internal survey with association membership in the Interim to gain a better understanding of the current practice of providing air-conditioning to residents. **Out of MMHA members that represented over 128,000 units statewide (About 60% of units in our membership), only 600 units had no central air-conditioning and did not offer window air-conditioning units to residents upon request (0.47% of units from the sample).**

As introduced, SB 12 mirrors closely the legislative language of House Bill 339 at the close of the 2025 Maryland Legislative Session. It was determined that with the prospective nature of the legislation and the flexibility built into it, thanks in part to the good faith efforts made with the house sponsor on various amendments, MMHA would no longer oppose the legislation at the end of the 2025 Legislative Session. For those reasons mentioned above, as well as the results of our internal membership survey during the Interim, MMHA will not oppose SB 12 as introduced.

If SB 12 passes, we would ask the Administration for reasonableness, and to give deference to housing providers with the interpretation of the law. Specifically, the threshold for what should be considered a "...SUBSTANTIAL UPGRADE OF ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS OR HEATING SYSTEMS" as described in 8-122(B)(2) should be a significant standard to attain. It is worth noting that for those housing providers that will make additional renovations as a result of the passage of this legislation, rents will increase on tenants at a time when the State has a dearth of affordable housing.

Please contact Matthew Pipkin, Jr. at (443) 995-4342 or mpipkin@mmhaonline.org with any questions.