

# SENATE BILL 689

E4, Q1

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CF HB 823

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By: **Senator Smith**

Introduced and read first time: January 29, 2024

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

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Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: March 14, 2024

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## CHAPTER \_\_\_\_\_

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Fire Protection and Prevention – Residential Rental Property – Requirements**  
3 **(Melanie Nicholle Diaz Fire Safety Act)**

4 FOR the purpose of establishing certain requirements relating to the installation of certain  
5 fire safety equipment in residential rental high–rise buildings and certain other  
6 property; requiring the Department of Housing and Community Development, in  
7 coordination with the State Fire Marshal, to identify and publish information on  
8 certain funding sources; authorizing the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore City  
9 or the governing body of a county or municipal corporation to grant, by law, a certain  
10 property tax credit against the county or municipal corporation property tax imposed  
11 on an apartment building or condominium building if the owner or condominium  
12 association made fire safety improvements to the building on or after a certain date;  
13 establishing the Workgroup to Develop Fire Safety Best Practices for Pre–1974  
14 High–Rise Apartment Buildings; and generally relating to fire protection and  
15 prevention in high–rise buildings.

16 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
17 Article – Public Safety  
18 Section 9–102, 9–105, 9–403, and 9–405  
19 Annotated Code of Maryland  
20 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

21 BY adding to  
22 Article – Public Safety  
23 Section 9–406

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### EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 Annotated Code of Maryland  
2 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

3 BY adding to  
4 Article – Tax – Property  
5 Section 9–268  
6 Annotated Code of Maryland  
7 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

8 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
9 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

10 **Article – Public Safety**

11 9–102.

12 (a) **(1) IN THIS SECTION, “HIGH–RISE BUILDING” MEANS A BUILDING FOR**  
13 **HUMAN OCCUPANCY THAT IS:**

14 **(I) SEVEN OR MORE STORIES ABOVE GRADE LEVEL; OR**

15 **(II) OVER 75 FEET IN HEIGHT.**

16 **(2) “HIGH–RISE BUILDING” DOES NOT INCLUDE:**

17 **(I) A STRUCTURE OR BUILDING USED EXCLUSIVELY FOR**  
18 **OPEN–AIR PARKING; OR**

19 **(II) A BUILDING USED EXCLUSIVELY FOR AGRICULTURAL**  
20 **PURPOSES.**

21 **(B)** This subtitle applies throughout the State, including Baltimore City.

22 ~~(b)~~ **(C) (1)** An automatic smoke alarm shall be provided in each sleeping  
23 area within each residential occupancy, including one– and two–family dwellings, lodging  
24 or rooming houses, hotels, dormitories, and apartment buildings, as defined in NFPA 101:  
25 Life Safety Code as adopted by the State Fire Prevention Commission.

26 **(2) (I) ~~BEGINNING JULY 1, 2024, SMOKE DETECTION EQUIPMENT~~**  
27 **~~CONSISTENT WITH NFPA 72: NATIONAL FIRE ALARM AND SIGNALING CODE~~**  
28 **STANDARDS 31, 2025, SMOKE DETECTORS SHALL BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE**  
29 **WITH LOCATION AND SPACING REQUIREMENTS ESTABLISHED BY THE NATIONAL**  
30 **FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION IN EACH INTERIOR PUBLIC CORRIDOR**  
31 **ACCESSIBLE BY UNITS IN A RESIDENTIAL RENTAL HIGH–RISE BUILDING.**

1                    **(II) A COUNTY MAY NOT REQUIRE UPGRADES TO FIRE SAFETY**  
2 **SYSTEMS NOT SPECIFIED IN SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF THIS PARAGRAPH AS A**  
3 **CONDITION OF ISSUING A PERMIT FOR THE INSTALLATION OF SMOKE DETECTORS**  
4 **REQUIRED UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF THIS PARAGRAPH.**

5            ~~(D)~~ **(D)**        Smoke alarms shall:

6                    (1)        be installed in accordance with NFPA 72: National Fire Alarm AND  
7 **SIGNALING** Code as referenced by the State Fire Prevention Code;

8                    (2)        be listed and labeled by a nationally recognized testing laboratory to  
9 comply with Underwriters Laboratories (UL) 217, “Standard for safety for single and  
10 multiple station smoke alarms”;

11                    (3)        be suitable for sensing visible or invisible products of combustion; and

12                    (4)        sound an alarm suitable to warn the occupants.

13            ~~(E)~~ **(E)**        Local jurisdictions may adopt smoke alarm regulations that are more  
14 stringent than the provisions of this subtitle.

15 9–105.

16            (a)        Each sleeping room occupied by a deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, or hard of hearing  
17 individual shall be provided with a smoke alarm suitable to alert the deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, or  
18 hard of hearing individual.

19            (b)        (1)        On written request on behalf of a tenant who is deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, or  
20 hard of hearing, a sleeping room occupied by a deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, or hard of hearing  
21 individual shall be provided with an approved notification appliance designed to alert deaf,  
22 **DEAFBLIND**, or hard of hearing individuals.

23                    (2)        The landlord shall provide a notification appliance that, when  
24 activated, provides a signal that is sufficient to warn the deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, or hard of  
25 hearing tenant in those sleeping rooms.

26            **(3) THE LANDLORD MAY NOT REQUIRE THAT A TENANT:**

27                    **(I) PAY FOR THE PURCHASE OR INSTALLATION OF A**  
28 **NOTIFICATION APPLIANCE; OR**

29                    **(II) PROVIDE ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION OR OTHER**  
30 **FORM OF EVIDENCE WITH A WRITTEN REQUEST FOR A NOTIFICATION APPLIANCE.**

1 (c) Hotels and motels shall have available at least one approved notification  
2 appliance for the deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, or hard of hearing individual for each 50 units or  
3 fraction of 50 units.

4 (d) Hotels and motels shall post in a conspicuous place at the registration desk a  
5 permanent sign that states the availability of smoke alarm notification appliances for the  
6 deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, or hard of hearing individual.

7 (e) (1) Hotels and motels may require a refundable deposit for notification  
8 appliances for the deaf, **DEAFBLIND**, or hard of hearing individual.

9 (2) The amount of the deposit may not exceed the value of the notification  
10 appliance.

11 (f) A landlord may **NOT** require reimbursement from a tenant for the cost of a  
12 smoke alarm required under this section.

13 9–403.

14 (a) Each high–rise building constructed after July 1, 1974, shall be protected by  
15 a complete automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with accepted engineering  
16 practices as approved by the authority with jurisdiction.

17 (b) (1) This section does not apply to a building that is less than 75 feet in  
18 height above grade level if:

19 (i) the local fire department has at least one approved first line piece  
20 of aerial equipment that is capable of reaching the roof of the building; and

21 (ii) accessibility to the building is provided on two sides of the  
22 perimeter of the building by a public way that is:

23 1. kept accessible at all times to the local fire department;  
24 and

25 2. close enough to the building to allow the fire department  
26 aerial equipment to reach 75 feet in height.

27 (2) For purposes of this subsection, height above grade level shall be  
28 determined by using the lowest elevation of the public way as a reference datum.

29 **(C) (1) BEGINNING JULY 1, 2024, THE OWNER OF A RESIDENTIAL RENTAL**  
30 **HIGH–RISE BUILDING THAT IS NOT PROTECTED BY A COMPLETE AUTOMATIC**  
31 **SPRINKLER SYSTEM SHALL POST NOTICE IN THE BUILDING IN ACCORDANCE WITH**  
32 **PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION.**

1                   **(2) NOTICE REQUIRED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION**  
2 **SHALL:**

3                   **(I) STATE, IN LETTERING THAT IS AT LEAST 1 INCH HIGH AND**  
4 **ON A CONTRASTING BACKGROUND, “WARNING: THIS HIGH-RISE BUILDING**  
5 **IS NOT PROTECTED THROUGHOUT BY A COMPLETE AUTOMATIC**  
6 **SPRINKLER SYSTEM”; AND**

7                   **(II) BE CONSPICUOUSLY POSTED AT ALL MAIN BUILDING**  
8 **ENTRANCES AS APPROVED BY THE AUTHORITY HAVING JURISDICTION.**

9                   **(D) (1) BEGINNING ~~JULY 1, 2024~~ JANUARY 1, 2025, AND CONTINUING**  
10 **UNTIL A RESIDENTIAL RENTAL HIGH-RISE BUILDING IS PROTECTED BY A COMPLETE**  
11 **AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM, THE OWNER OF A RESIDENTIAL RENTAL**  
12 **HIGH-RISE BUILDING THAT IS NOT PROTECTED SHALL INCLUDE IN ANY LEASE**  
13 **AGREEMENT CONSPICUOUS NOTICE INDICATING THAT THE BUILDING IS NOT**  
14 **CURRENTLY PROTECTED BY A COMPLETE AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM.**

15                   **(2) NOTICE REQUIRED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION**  
16 **SHALL BE INITIALED BY THE TENANT.**

17                   **(E) (1) THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY**  
18 **DEVELOPMENT, IN COORDINATION WITH THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL AND THE**  
19 **MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, SHALL IDENTIFY**  
20 **FUNDING SOURCES THAT MAY BE AVAILABLE TO THE OWNER OF A RESIDENTIAL**  
21 **RENTAL HIGH-RISE BUILDING OR THE GOVERNING BODY OF A CONDOMINIUM OR**  
22 **COOPERATIVE HOUSING CORPORATION TO AID THE OWNER OR GOVERNING BODY IN**  
23 **PROTECTING THE BUILDING WITH A COMPLETE AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM.**

24                   **(2) THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY**  
25 **DEVELOPMENT SHALL PUBLISH INFORMATION ON FUNDING SOURCES IDENTIFIED**  
26 **UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION ON THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING**  
27 **AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT’S WEBSITE.**

28 9-405.

29                   **(A) For fire safety purposes, the owner of a residential high-rise building with**  
30 **rental units shall provide:**

31                   **(1) reasonable written notice annually to all residents of the residential**  
32 **high-rise building to inform residents who are mobility impaired of their right to request a**  
33 **rental unit on the first five floors of the high-rise building if one should become available;**  
34 **AND**



1 (a) There is a Workgroup to Develop Fire Safety Best Practices for Pre-1974  
2 High-Rise Apartment Buildings.

3 (b) The Workgroup consists of the following members:

4 (1) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of  
5 the Senate;

6 (2) one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the  
7 House;

8 (3) the State Fire Marshal, or the State Fire Marshal's designee;

9 (4) the chair of the State Fire Prevention Commission, or the chair's  
10 designee;

11 (5) the president of the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association, or the  
12 president's designee;

13 (6) the president of the Maryland State Firemen's Association, or the  
14 president's designee; and

15 (7) the following members, appointed by the Governor:

16 (i) one representative of the Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland;

17 (ii) one representative of a fire sprinkler trade association;

18 (iii) one representative of a fire alarm trade association;

19 (iv) one licensed architect;

20 (v) one fire protection engineer;

21 (vi) ~~one representative~~ two representatives of a building owners and  
22 managers association; and

23 (vii) one full-time resident of a high-rise building located in the  
24 State.

25 (c) The State Fire Marshal or the State Fire Marshal's designee shall serve as the  
26 chair of the Workgroup.

27 (d) The Department of State Police shall provide staff for the Workgroup.

28 (e) A member of the Workgroup:

1 (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Workgroup; but

2 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State  
3 Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

4 (f) (1) The Workgroup shall:

5 ~~(i) study current strategies, practices, and technology for the~~  
6 ~~installation of fire alarm and automatic fire sprinkler systems in residential rental~~  
7 ~~high-rise buildings constructed before 1974; and~~

8 ~~(ii) develop best practices and make recommendations for the~~  
9 ~~installation of such systems in residential rental high-rise buildings constructed before~~  
10 ~~1974 in the State.~~

11 ~~(2) In developing recommendations under paragraph (1) of this section, the~~  
12 ~~Workgroup shall consider:~~

13 ~~(i) the cost, design, installation, testing, and maintenance of~~  
14 ~~automatic fire sprinkler systems;~~

15 ~~(ii) the duration of installation and the intensity of the disruption of~~  
16 ~~normal occupancy in high-rise rental buildings; and~~

17 ~~(iii) the availability and feasibility of alternative approved protection~~  
18 ~~systems and arrangements.~~

19 (i) study fire safety risks in high-rise apartment buildings that do  
20 not have automatic sprinkler systems or other fire safety technology;

21 (ii) study current strategies, practices, and technology to mitigate  
22 fire risks, maximize evacuation of occupants, and allow for greater access and more  
23 expedient responses by emergency response professionals; and

24 (iii) develop recommendations and best practices for the  
25 improvement of fire safety in high-rise apartment buildings that do not have fire sprinkler  
26 systems and other fire safety technology.

27 (2) In developing recommendations under paragraph (1) of this section, the  
28 Workgroup shall consider:

29 (i) the availability, feasibility, and degree of fire hazard mitigation  
30 of each alternative fire protection system or arrangement;

31 (ii) the cost, design, installation, testing, and maintenance of each  
32 fire protection system; and



1                    (iii) the duration of installation for each alternative fire protection  
2 system and the intensity of the disruption of normal occupancy caused by installation.

3            (g) On or before December 31, 2024, the Workgroup shall report its findings and  
4 recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State  
5 Government Article, the General Assembly.

6            SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That Section 1 of this Act shall take  
7 effect July 1, 2024.

8            SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, except as provided in Section  
9 3 of this Act, this Act shall take effect June 1, 2024. Section 2 of this Act shall remain  
10 effective for a period of 1 year and 1 month and, at the end of June 30, 2025, Section 2 of  
11 this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and  
12 of no further force and effect.

Approved:

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Governor.

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President of the Senate.

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Speaker of the House of Delegates.