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MAYOR

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HB 1540

March 4, 2020

TO: Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Nicholas Blendy, Deputy Director of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 1540 Environment – Mold Inspections – Standards, Reporting, and Penalties

POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) is offering the following **letter of information** on House Bill (HB) 1540.

If enacted, HB 1540 would require the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health, the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Maryland Department of General Services, to establish uniform standards for mold assessment and remediation on or before June 1, 2022. It would further require local jurisdictions to conduct an annual mold inspection of public and private school facilities, licensed child care centers, nursing homes, assisted living facilities for the elderly and rental dwellings. Additionally, the legislation would require local jurisdictions to submit to MDE an annual indoor air quality report summarizing the results of the annual inspections.

The BCA recognizes the importance of this healthy housing issue and the desire to establish standards for mold inspections. We note, however, that there are over 160,000 rental dwelling units in the City of Baltimore and the BCA presently lacks the capability to handle annual mold inspections of rental dwelling units. The unfunded mandate this Bill represents would require the hiring and training of dozens of additional inspectors along with staff support. The BCA would imagine other local governments and impacted agencies would face similar unfunded costs.

The BCA notes that HB 1540 does provide for the establishment of a process for a third-party inspector to perform the inspection. Such a provision mirrors the existing local Rental Registry in Baltimore City¹ and adoption of such a model would lower the costs of implementation. However, the requirement that inspections occur annually represents a mismatch with the City of Baltimore's local law.²

BCA believes that HB 1540's one-size fits all mandate requiring jurisdictions to adjust required timelines to match existing programs or, more directly, assigning the responsibility and cost of the inspections directly to the owners and operators of facilities, may not be the best fit for every jurisdiction. If HB 1540 were to move forward without this consideration, the BCA respectfully requests that the General Assembly study the appropriateness of dedicating a revenue stream to local jurisdictions to cover costs of implementation.

Thank you for considering the foregoing **letter of information** on HB 1540.

¹ See Baltimore City Ordinance 18-130 and Article 13, § 5-7 of the Baltimore City Code.

² Baltimore City Code, Art. 13, § 5-9