



Bill Title: House Bill 345, Public Utilities - Gas Service Regulator Safety (Flower Branch Act)

Committee: Economic Matters

Date: January 14, 2021

Position: Favorable

This testimony is offered on behalf of the Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA). MMHA is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members consist of owners and managers of more than 210,000 rental housing homes in over 958 apartment communities. Our members house over 538,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA also represents over 250 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry including towing companies.

Following the tragic events at Flower Branch Apartments in 2016, House Bill 345 seeks to ensure that such a calamity does not occur again. This bill requires gas service regulators to be installed or relocated outside of multi-family structures, subject to certain requirements and exemptions. By January 1, 2022, each gas company must file a plan with the Public Service Commission (PSC) to relocate gas service regulators in multifamily residential structures. After considering specified information, PSC must approve, disapprove, or approve with modifications each plan by January 1, 2023. Until the plans are fully implemented, gas companies must update PSC annually on the progress made in the previous year, and PSC must in turn report that information to the Governor and the General Assembly.

As was the case at Flower Branch Apartments, an explosion can occur due to the failure of a mercury service regulator, with an unconnected vent line, allowing natural gas into the meter room where it ignited. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) stated that the gas company was responsible for ensuring the vent line was connected. MMHA supports efforts to ensure multifamily housing is safe for all residents. Echoing the position of the NTSB that the public utility is responsible for gas service regulators which are typically placed “before the meter,” MMHA supports replacement of these devices by the public utility.

For the foregoing reasons, MMHA respectfully requests a **favorable report on House Bill 345.**

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