



Charles County Government

CHARLES COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Mark Belton
County Administrator

March 12, 2021

The Hon. Kumar P. Barve, Chairman
Environment and Transportation Committee
Committee Members
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: House Bill 1061 - Southern Maryland – Multifamily Dwelling Registration – Fees and Fines

Dear Chairman Barve, Vice Chairwoman Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

The purpose of this written testimony is to express **SUPPORT** for HB 1061- Southern Maryland – Multifamily Dwelling Registration – Fees and Fines, with existing amendments.

This bill will enable the Commissioners of Charles County to establish a registration and inspection program for residential dwelling units offered for rent. With the passage of this bill, and should the Commissioners pass a local law, rental units may be subject to a fee for registration with the County and an inspection to ensure the condition of residential rental properties is proper for human habitation.

Charles County has documented an increase in citizen complaints related to unsafe living conditions in tenant-occupied residences. These complaints include, but are not limited to, faulty electrical work, broken plumbing, missing smoke alarms, and makeshift bedrooms without proper egress. While all of these items are clearly violations of existing minimum livability standards within Maryland law, the County does not have a mechanism to identify rental units and ensure they are meeting the standards. In other words, our current process is reactive rather than proactive. A registration program would allow us to implement inspection and the enforcement processes needed to keep all of our residential tenants safe, and bring substandard housing into the light and into compliance. We are particularly concerned for our low-income residents, who may suffer with unsafe living conditions, and do not file complaints for fear of rent increases or retribution by landlords.

Conversely, we believe that a registration program will also be an added benefit to our upstanding landlords as an acknowledgement of the good condition the dwelling was in at the time of rental.

We are satisfied with the amendments to H.B. 1061 that now allows for the legislation to cover all residential units offered for rent as opposed to being limited to multifamily dwellings. For the reasons herein provided, the Board of Commissioners for Charles County supports H.B. 1061.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'RBC', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President
County Commissioners of Charles County

cc: Charles County Legislative Delegation