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February 2, 2021

To: The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Karen S. Straughn
Consumer Protection Division

Re: House Bill 451 – Real Property – Residential Rental Property Inspection – Remote Video Inspection (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General submits the following written testimony in support of House Bill 451 submitted by Delegate Shaneka Henson. This bill provides for remote video inspections of residential rental property during a protracted state of emergency declared by the Governor or a severe weather event which renders an in-person inspection inadvisable.

Inspections are often necessary when there is a problem with a rental property causing hazardous conditions to exist. However, during the pandemic, such inspections have been complicated by the desire of individuals to be safe in their property and the availability of inspectors who are willing to enter a residence. The Consumer Protection Division received many calls during the current pandemic in which tenants expressed concerns about admitting a landlord and/or his agent into their property. These calls are difficult due to the conflicting concerns, which are reasonable on the part of each party.

This bill directs local jurisdictions to adopt regulations calculated to permit remote inspections that are substantially comparable to on-site visits. Having the ability to conduct inspections by remote video ensures that people are able to fairly and safely conduct inspections of the hazardous condition and begin the process of repair.

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For these reasons, we ask that the Environment and Transportation Committee return a favorable report on this bill.

cc: The Honorable Shaneka Henson
Members, Environment and Transportation Committee