



February 2, 2021

Maryland House of Delegates
Economic Matters Committee
Delegate Dereck E. Davis, Chair
Delegate Kathleen M. Dumais, Vice Chair

Testimony of Raymond Nevo, National Housing Trust, in support of House Bill 379

My name is Raymond Nevo, I am the State Policy and Equity Advocate at the National Housing Trust, a Maryland resident, and someone that grew up in low-income affordable housing that was not energy efficient. Today I write in support of HB 379 because had this legislation been in place while I was growing, our family's long term and short term hardships may have been significantly reduced.


During elementary school, my grandmother and I had to move twice within the same apartment complex because rain seeped through our roof and caused several leaks in our ceiling. The asbestos in our apartments made them uninhabitable. Our windows leaked year round, and our apartments were poorly insulated, but because we were on an extremely fixed income our methods to make our space bearable were: layer up in the winter, or run a fan in the summer, and even then our utility bills were often unexplainably high.

At the age of eight I was rushed to the hospital after suffering what I would later learn to be an asthma attack. For the next 12 years I would need to manage my asthma almost daily. I missed days from school, spent additional money on transportation to the doctor and was never able to play soccer as much as I wanted to. A few years after my diagnosis, my grandmother, a cerebral hemorrhage survivor - was also diagnosed with asthma.

A more energy efficient home would have helped my family to afford our living expenses. The Maryland Dept. of Housing and Community Development has reported that households receiving energy efficiency upgrades through their programs saved more than \$400 per year on average through lower energy bills.¹ As families rebound from the economic toll of the COVID 19 pandemic, and the federal government drags its heels on a response, every dollar saved is critical.

Almost 15 years since I moved out, my grandmother still lives in low-income housing that is not energy efficient, and continues to deal with her health complications, which have only become worse. My mother, also a 15 year tenant in low-income housing with visible mold, was diagnosed with COPD and requires oxygen.

¹ "2017.09.01DHCD_LimitedIncome_MD2018-2020_PlanFINAL_HighRes.Pdf," n.d.



These stories are tragic, but the data shows these stories are not uncommon. Last year the Maryland legislature failed to take action. In the wake of a pandemic that has exacerbated the health disparities of those in low-income housing, coupled with a reignited fight for racial justice, it would be wrong to once again bypass an obligation to provide relief for communities that have historically suffered the most in times of crisis. I look forward to seeing Maryland follow suit with so many other states, and make this commitment to its residents and to the environment.