

SAMUEL I. "SANDY" ROSENBERG
Legislative District 41
Baltimore City

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Chair

Government Operations and
Health Facilities Subcommittee

House Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Respond to Office Indicated

□ *Annapolis Office*
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 365
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3297 · 301-858-3297
800-492-7122 Ext. 3297
Samuel.Rosenberg@house.state.md.us

□ *District Office*
4811 Liberty Heights Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21207
410-664-2646

Testimony of Delegate Samuel I. Rosenberg

Before the House Judiciary Committee

In Support Of

House Bill 1075

State Fire Marshal – Investigations – Reporting Requirement

Mister Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Last fall an explosion rocked Northwest Baltimore. It destroyed three homes, injured seven people, and killed two residents. The initial investigation could not rule out, “that improper or incomplete installation of the new HVAC system was the cause for the gas leak.”¹

However, during the months following the explosion it was extraordinarily difficult for residents of the neighborhood, State legislators, and other elected officials to learn any details of the investigation from State or local fire officials.

In the aftermath of a disaster where lives were lost, the public rightfully expects answers from elected officials and government employees.

House Bill 1075, with the amendment I am offering today, would require either the State Fire Marshal or the relevant local fire department to make a public report periodically on investigations relating to a fire or explosions. The first report would take place within 90 days of the incident, and then every 90 days following until the investigation concludes.

The update report would include only the status of the investigation and the expected date it will be completed. Thus, it is not burdensome to fire officials.

Transparency among and between government officials and the public is necessary to ensure vital information is disseminated on a timely basis. When information is withheld, it undermines public trust in the government and leaves everyone with more questions than answers.

¹ Baltimore City Fire Department, Fire Investigation Bureau, Complete Investigation Report of Fire, “Incident # 0107335.” <https://htv-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/files/ilovepdf-merged-1610555336.pdf>

HB1075 would clarify the procedure in any future incidents. It would create a clear and consistent requirement for the State Fire Marshal or a local fire department after an explosion which leaves a community on edge.

I urge the Committee to act favorably on House Bill 1075.

March 2, 2021