

February 8, 2022

Maryland House of Delegates
Economic Matters Committee
Delegate C.T. Wilson, Chair
Delegate Brian M. Crosby, 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 manager at the National Housing Trust, a Maryland resident, and someone that grew up in subsidized housing that was not energy efficient. Today I write in support of HB 108 because had this legislation been in place while I was growing up, our family's long term and short-term hardships would 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 causing 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 my first asthma attack. For almost 15 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.

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reported that households receiving energy efficiency upgrades through their programs saved more than \$400 per year on average through lower energy bills.¹ However, those are only the measurable benefits. The time lost going to doctor's appointments, making up school work, worrying about the next water leak, utility bill, or asthma attack cannot not be made up. This legislation can relieve some of the stresses and anxieties that families like mine endure, and as these families fight to stabilize two years into the pandemic, every minute and dollar saved is critical.

My grandmother still lives in subsidized housing that is not energy efficient and continues to deal with her worsening health conditions. My mother, also a life-long tenant of subsidized housing with poor insulation, leaky windows, and visible mold, was diagnosed with COPD and has required oxygen for over 10 years.

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. For two years the Maryland General Assembly has failed to act on this issue. This pandemic has exacerbated the health disparities of everyone, but those in low-income housing have suffered the most. As our country begins to prioritize environmental and racial justice, it would be wrong to once again bypass this opportunity to provide relief for communities that suffer 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.