



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB71
Manufactured Home Modernization Act of 2022

Testimony by Delegate Vaughn Stewart

January 25th, 2022 • Environment and Transportation Committee

What the Bill Does

HB71 will offer new and important protections to manufactured and mobile homeowners. Primarily, the bill requires that manufactured home community owners notify residents of a proposed sale or transfer 60 days before acceptance, and fines those owners that willfully refuse to comply. Further, the bill allows a majority of residents to submit their own purchase offer within the specified notification window.

Why the Bill Is Important

While manufactured and mobile homeowners have the luxury of owning their own house, their level of housing stability is far less than that of traditional owners. This is for one simple reason: manufactured and mobile home owners often don't own the land their property sits on. **Even if they may feel comfortable under one landowner, the threat of property sale could have devastating consequences on their ability to stay in their current setting.** A sale to a hedge fund or developer could result in exorbitant rent hikes or even eviction.

By requiring 60-days notice ahead of a contemplated sale, this bill has two primary benefits. First, it allows for the possibility of a resident-owned community, in which the manufactured and mobile homeowners can control the conditions of these parks — an ownership model that has proven successful across the country. However, there are significant and legitimate hurdles to the purchasing of a manufactured home community. Beyond the logistical hurdles of coordinating a large number of stakeholders, the median household income of a mobile homeowner is around \$35,000 — half of the income of site-built homeowners — making it difficult to fund a competitive offer.

Therefore, beyond purchasing power, this bill's second effect is to ensure that manufactured and mobile homeowners have adequate notice of this potentially traumatic change in their life. The current law only requires notice of a sale within 30 days of its actualization; compare this to evictions, which in Montgomery County often take at least seven months. **If a new property sale would result**

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in an unlivable space for a homeowner, they need the time to look for a new place to live. Otherwise, they could be forced into homelessness.

Why the Committee Should Vote Favorably

Manufactured and mobile homeowners are some of the most vulnerable Marylanders in the state, as they have little to no protection from the whims of their community owners. **Maryland is significantly behind their neighboring states on this issue; it is the only state between Virginia and Maine without any protections for residents in a manufactured home community when that community is sold.** This bill provides the bare minimum of residential protection — a simple notification of sale and window to make their own offer. These vulnerable residents must be given the rights they deserve.

Working-class Marylanders deserve more than a month's heads-up before their lives are derailed. I urge a favorable report.