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Appropriations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Chair: Delegate Kumar Barve
Vice Chair: Delegate Dana Stein
6 Bladen Street Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chairman Barve, Vice-Chair Stein, House Environment and Transportation Committee, thank you for considering HB361 entitled “Mold Inspection and Remediation – Standards, Reporting, Penalties, and Tax Credit.” This bill will create healthier and safer living environments for residential renters all across our state, by creating uniform standards for mold assessment and remediation, provisions for enforcement and penalties, and a tax credit to offset the cost to property owners wishing to provide healthy housing.

I was talking with my staff just the other day and they shared a conversation they had with one of our state employees displaced by the recent mold remediation in the DLS building. My staff in the course of casual conversation just asked if the person was liking their new location. Instead of commenting on anything else about the location that said “Yes! I was sick constantly over there.” I commend our leadership for their swift response to the Air Quality issues in our public building, but imagine if this were in your home. Imagine if you didn’t have the means to move and the building wasn’t yours to remediate. At some point “being sick constantly” would become the norm, and not just for you but for your children and loved ones also.

This unfortunately is the case for families all across our state. This bill did not come out of nowhere, it isn’t a solution seeking a problem, it came forth because of real people, real residents living in real houses, that are covered in real mold, and there is nothing they can do about it. The threat to tenant health by the presence of mold is clear. In fact, in our conversations with the Maryland Multi-Housing Association, they speculated that every single rental unit they represented had mold in need of remediation. I can only hope this is hyperbole on behalf of their representatives, but it does evidence how great the issue is.

And if you don’t want to listen to the property owners, you could listen to the renters themselves. There is a wealth of anecdotal evidence that shows the presence of mold in homes across our state, homes rented

most often to our most vulnerable citizens. As our law currently stands there is no recourse for these renters. HB 361 will provide that recourse to these renters, while also providing state funding to help property owners do remediation. My hope is that both of these provisions help create healthier living situations for families.

Mold can carry severe health consequences to all people, but especially among the elderly and children. It is the elderly and those with existing respiratory problems who suffer the worst, in some cases even requiring hospitalization as a suspected result of unmitigated mold growth. Many parents also suspect that household mold is the cause of their children's asthma development. In fact, a 2009 report put out by the World Health Organization found and presents substantial evidence connecting the presence of mold with upper respiratory tract symptoms, coughing, wheezing, asthma development in otherwise healthy children, and the worsening of already diagnosed asthma.

These problems have only been made worse in the last few years as COVID has increased the health consequences of respiratory difficulties even to the level of comorbidity. This combined with children having to spend more time in their homes and less time in their schools, where we do have mold remediation standards, has only exacerbated the problem.

HB 361 will require that a uniform standard for mold assessment and remediation be established, adopted, and enforced, which will serve to create healthier homes and healthier citizens. While we have a fiscal note that can indicate the cost of this bill's implementation, we do not have the ability to comment on the net savings that will be generated to our state insurance programs by the better health outcomes in their participants.

My goal, of course, is not to put an undue burden on our rental property owners, which is why the bill also creates a state income tax credit for mold remediation services incurred by the owner of a residential rental property. The goal is that mold would be remediated, housing would be improved, and citizens would be housed healthier and become healthier. Certainly if we believe mold remediation is best for our employees, we would want the same for all our citizens, especially our most vulnerable.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shaneka Henson".

Delegate Shaneka Henson