



January 24, 2022

Senator Joanne Benson  
24th Legislative District – Prince George’s County  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 214  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Benson and Co-Sponsors of SB529:

I’m Dr. Brittany Campbell, Staff Entomologist at the National Pest Management Association, also known as NPMA. NPMA is a non-profit organization that supports the pest management industry, with more than 5,500 member-companies around the country. I received my master’s degree from Virginia Tech and PhD from the University of Florida, where I spent collectively seven years researching bed bugs and working in low-income communities to control bed bugs. I appreciate the opportunity to testify.

NPMA supports Senator Benson’s bed bug bill or SB529. We are supportive of the bill as it adheres to bed bug best management practices that are based on science and bed bug biology, prescribing duties for landlords, tenants, and pest management professionals, and provides a proven private-sector solution to bed bug problems by hiring licensed pest management professionals to inspect and treat for bed bugs. In Chicago, studies have shown that this framework not only is effective and reduces bed bug populations, but it also provides the added benefit of reducing evictions.<sup>1</sup> The effectiveness of this framework caught the attention of lawmakers from around the country.

In fact, NPMA is a member of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) Corporate Round Table where our organization partnered with Representative Leslie Herod to propose that her bed bug law be endorsed as model legislation by NBCSL. In December 2020, NBCSL endorsed her bed bug law as model legislation. NPMA believes that the NBCSL endorsed legislation is a model for the country and we are pleased to see that Senator Benson’s bill builds off of this model legislation.

It is no secret that Maryland has a very concerning bed bug problem, as the Baltimore and DC Metropolitan areas are ranked 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> on Orkin Pest Control’s top bed bug cities. Maryland’s bed bug policy has fallen behind other states heavily infested with bed bugs that have passed legislation

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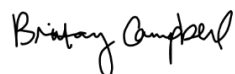
<sup>1</sup> Chris Sutherland, Andrew J. Greenlee, and Daniel Schneider, "Socioeconomic Drivers of Urban Pest Prevalence," *People and Nature*, 2020, <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/pan3.10096>

requiring the use of licensed pest management professionals, including Connecticut, Colorado and others.

Bed bugs are an incredibly complex insect to treat and eradicate. The unique hiding behavior of bed bugs and their ability to feed undetected require much more extensive control measures than cockroaches and other pests found indoors. In addition, eradicating bed bugs is very labor intensive, often requiring the movement of furniture, hours of laundering, breaking apart furniture, and multiple treatments until success is finally achieved. This is not a task that is easily accomplished by the regular homeowner, landlord, or tenant that is ill prepared to understand the amount of work required for successful bed bug management and is often armed with insufficient products.

I have listened to the traumatized voices of citizens who are victims of harrowing bed bug infestations, the mother who is fearful to put her baby in a crib at night and barely sleeps, the disabled blind man who is sitting in a wheelchair with bed bugs visibly crawling around him, and the family fearful to ask their landlord for help because they may be evicted and have nowhere else to go. Due to the difficult nature of managing these pests and the havoc that they wreak, it is absolutely vital that Maryland has a specific law that addresses the duties and responsibilities of landlords, tenants, and licensed pest management professionals, so that the citizens and tenants of Maryland can be alleviated of the societal shame, physical distress of bites and allergic reactions, and mental toll that often leads to loss of sleep, depression, and anxiety. The reality is that low-income Marylanders are disproportionately subjected to bed bug infestations. We are incredibly hopeful Senator Benson's bill will bring relief to those who are unfortunately living with bed bugs when they shouldn't have to.

Implementing the expertise of licensed pest control companies would be the most feasible and reliable answer to curbing bed bug infestations within buildings. In addition, tenants should not fear eviction and other ramifications when they notify landlords of an infestation in a timely manner and cooperate, and landlords should be responsible for employing pest management professionals for inspections and treatments. Every party wins in this situation, the tenant gets relief from bed bugs, landlords save money by squashing the bed bug problem early and preventing further spread of infestations in their building, and the Maryland community wins by fewer bed bugs being spread among public transport, schools, offices, apartments, and homes throughout Maryland.



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