

Testimony in support of House Bill 907

RE: Delegate Courtney Watson bill entitled:

An Act Concerning Public Safety – Out of Service Elevators – Repair Contracts

My name is Virginia Townsend and I reside at 8901 Brauerton Road, Unit 206, Ellicott City, Maryland 21043. My building is one of the five 4 story multi-family dwelling units and is part of the Jeffersons Complex.

This past summer our building was struck by lightning during a severe storm and the strike damaged the electrical system and basically “fried” the circuit board controlling the elevator. Each building has four floors and one elevator. As a result of the lightning damage the elevator was out of service from August 6, 2022 to August 25, 2022. We were advised that there would be a delay in repairing the elevator because there was no spare circuit board and the contractor had advised they were on back order and might take as long as six weeks to receive.

This created a major crisis for me as I live with and cared for my 87 year old mother who required kidney dialysis 3 times per week (M-W-F). In addition to suffering from kidney disease she had COPD, and chronic arthritis in her knees. She required transport from our condo unit to the car via wheelchair as she was only able to navigate short distances with use of a cane and/or walker. I explored options for assistance with local county health agencies and E-911 services and was basically told there was no resource to provide assistance.

Fortunately, I was able to have my two grandsons, aged 18 and 19, come and carry her down the stairs in her wheelchair, to take her to dialysis and bring her back up the stairs when she returned. This was cumbersome and dangerous as my mother weighed approximately 125 pounds and the wheelchair another 35. There were no handles to facilitate carrying a patient and we consider ourselves lucky that they were able to do this without any problems. In fact, we did have to purchase and use a transport wheelchair that was about 15 pounds lighter to make it easier and safer for my grandsons to do this job.

Because this work was an imposition to my grandson’s schedule I basically postponed and deferred my mother’s routine doctor’s appointments until the elevator could be repaired. The appointments were needed but they were not life-threatening like the dialysis.

Our building captain had solicited the tenants for ideas and concerns and established some support for tenants who could not navigate the stairs but needed help with groceries or shopping errands. He had also asked the contractor for the elevator about the possibility of our Condo Association purchasing a circuit board from another vendor and having that installed since there were numerous tenants in this building that were extremely inconvenienced by the elevator outage. He found that the service contract with the elevator vendor prohibited the use of any outside equipment or repairmen be used to repair or service the elevators, Even in this emergency situation, where the vendor had advised possible a six week outage, there was no option other than to wait.

I don’t know that I would have been able to maintain my mother’s dialysis schedule for six weeks, and certainly she could not have deferred all of her medical/dental appointments for that long. I may have had to consider moving her to a temporary managed care facility for the duration of the outage which would have created a financial burden because I doubt her health insurance would have covered the cost.

Had HB 907 been in effect it could have allowed an expedited repair of the elevator outage and purchase of the necessary equipment in a more timely manner. Please consider the impact this outage had not only on my family but the others in this building that were disrupted by this event. I fully support HB907 and urge you to vote for it’s implementation as soon as possible.

Thank You-

