

SB0970_FAV_Weissburg.pdf

Uploaded by: Adrianna Weissburg

Position: FAV

SB 0970 – SUPPORT
Adrianna Weissburg
a.s.weissburg@gmail.com, 410-212-9460

SB 0970 SUPPORT
Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms –
Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Adrianna Weissburg and I am writing this in favor of bill SB 0970. I am a friend of Melanie Diaz. This bill must be passed in order to prevent senseless tragedies such as the loss of life of my dear friend and her two beloved dogs during the Arrive apartment complex fire on February 18, 2023 in Silver Spring, MD.

My hope is that no other family and loved ones will have to endure what the Diaz family did that day, for something that can be prevented with stricter sprinkler system regulations. This bill is urgent because tragedies like this can happen at any moment; without it, we are putting the lives of many innocent civilians at risk in buildings yet to be retrofitted with sprinklers.

Melanie was a wonderful young woman who left a great legacy of love and kindness in her passing. She was smart, witty, and full of life and did what she thought was best in that moment. We can't bring her back, but we have a responsibility to make the necessary changes in the wake of this tragedy to ensure that no other person or pet suffers the way the three of them did in last moments.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

SB0970_FAV_Pickett.pdf

Uploaded by: Alan Pickett

Position: FAV

SB0970- SUPPORT
Alan Pickett
youbetyourbipee@gmail.com
Phone: 734-276-8521

SB0970 Written Support
Fire Protection and Prevention-Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Alan Pickett and I am a Silver Spring resident, and neighbor of Melanie Diaz's fiancé, Michael Sabolvarro, and I am writing in support of SB 0970. On Saturday, February 18th 2023 an early morning apartment fire in Silver Spring MD resulted in the death of Melanie Diaz, a recent Georgetown alumna and current staff at Aspen Institute as a Program Coordinator within its Energy and the Environment Program. As a friend and neighbor over several years, I am deeply fond of Michael and his family, and grew to enjoy and appreciate Melanie as an integral member. My respect and admiration for Melanie grew as I learned about her principled life and work on climate change at the Aspen Institute, her love and care for animals, and her loving and total immersion in Michael's large family, as she became a cherished friend to Michael's siblings, nieces and nephews, and truly loved by Michael's mother, Maria, and grandmother, Linda.

When I was informed of Melanie's death, I was seized with shock, but the emerging details are enough to leave anyone gobsmacked with despair: I believe that Melanie was the only person who died as a result of the fire. It appears clear that Melanie did everything she was "supposed to do" in the event of such an emergency: she immediately harnessed her dogs, exited the apartment, and entered the nearest staircase. A stairwell door with evacuation signage is present immediately opposite what was Melanie's apartment door. She was found lying in the hallway two floors below her own unit, having succumbed to smoke inhalation, one arm protectively embracing the dogs she shared with Michael. She had removed her own jacket, wrapping it around the dogs to protect them from the smoke. I was among the family and neighbors who received Michael when he returned home from the apartment that Saturday. He emerged from his car cradling the body of Melanie's dog Ella, his hands covered in black ash, and collapsed into the arms of his waiting family, weeping openly as he greeted each of them; his sisters, brother, mother, and extended family. It's just a devastatingly cruel reversal that, by Saturday

afternoon, Michael had lost the future he envisioned for himself when he arose that morning. He lost his life-partner, and the world lost an engaged and hopeful person, a person our world cannot afford to lose right now.

As it happens, had the apartment complex in which Melanie lived had an up-to-current-code sprinkler and alarm system, she and the dogs would very likely be alive today. Tragically, Melanie's apartment did not have a smoke detector or sprinkler System. The hallways of the complex do not have a smoke detector. My understanding is that the alarm had to be manually activated by a resident who blindly crawled on all fours through the smoke in his hallway. He had to pull the alarm TWICE before it worked.

Sprinklers and smoke alarms are not something I pay much attention to as I move around in the world, and I doubt that many of us do. But as a witness to the heartbreak visited on Michael and Melanie's families, I cannot accept the idea of high rise apartments without modern means of effectively alerting residents to danger, mitigating the damage, and stopping the fire as close to the source as possible, as quickly as possible. I am aware that Montgomery County has had other high-rise fires in recent years in older buildings without modern systems. It is deeply unsettling to contemplate the potential for future loss of life, future heartbreak, future suffering if the need for building improvements is not addressed.

I urge a favorable report on SB0970.

Alan Pickett
721 Silver Spring Ave
Silver Spring MD 20910

SB0970- SUPPORT-Parshall.pdf

Uploaded by: Allison Parshall

Position: FAV

SB0970- SUPPORT

Allison Parshall

parshallison@gmail.com

330-949-9014

SB0970 Written Support

Fire Protection and Prevention-Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements

(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Allison Parshall and I knew Melanie Diaz from Georgetown University. Melanie was a sunny, compassionate, ambitious person. By 25 years old, she had graduated from Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service, had interned at NASA, and worked as a Program Coordinator at the Aspen Institute in the Energy and Environment sector. Melanie was the first person I met at Georgetown — we had matched as freshman roommates. I was so nervous on move-in day, but as soon as I saw her smile, I knew I would be fine. She met every challenging experience with a spreadsheet and a plan of action. She cared deeply for others and saw the humor in every situation.

Melanie and her two dogs passed away from injuries sustained in the Arrive Building apartment fire in Silver Spring, Maryland on February 18th. Melanie did everything she was supposed to: she immediately harnessed her two puppies, exited the apartment, and entered the nearest staircase to evacuate. Melanie's apartment **did not have a smoke detector or sprinkler system**. The building's alarm had to **be manually pulled twice to activate**.

Melanie's death was a tragedy. The Maryland State Fire Marshal said that the fire could have been put out if the building had installed sprinklers in apartment units. A single sprinkler in the unit where the fire started could have saved her life.

The purpose of this bill is to save lives and make homes safe. High-rise buildings in Montgomery County had until January 1, 2033 to install automatic sprinkler systems per the Maryland fire safety code. These changes need to be made much sooner. **A home is not a home if it is not safe.**

I urge a favorable report on SB0970.



HB0062_FAV_PAULINO.pdf

Uploaded by: Ashly Paulino

Position: FAV

SB0970- SUPPORT

Ashly Paulino

paulinoashly@gmail.com

(201) 598-6013

SB0970 Written Support

Fire Protection and Prevention-Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements

(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Ashly Paulino and Melanie Diaz was one of my closest friends. Melanie was a kind, loving, and ambitious young woman. By 25 years old, she had graduated from Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service, had interned at NASA, and worked as a Program Coordinator at the Aspen Institute in the Energy and Environment sector. I loved her and her loss pains me deeply.

Melanie and her two dogs passed away from injuries sustained in the Arrive Building apartment fire in Silver Spring, Maryland on February 18th. Melanie did everything she was supposed to: she immediately harnessed her two puppies, exited the apartment, and entered the nearest staircase to evacuate. Melanie's apartment **did not have a smoke detector or sprinkler system**. The building's alarm had to **be manually pulled twice to activate**.

Melanie's death was a tragedy. The Maryland State Fire Marshal said that the fire could have been put out if the building had installed sprinklers in apartment units. A single sprinkler in the unit where the fire started could have saved her life.

The purpose of this bill is to save lives and make homes safe. High-rise buildings in Montgomery County had until January 1, 2033 to install automatic sprinkler systems per the Maryland fire safety code. These changes need to be made much sooner. **A home is not a home if it is not safe.**

I urge a favorable report on SB0970.

SB 0970 OSFM Letter.pdf

Uploaded by: Brian Geraci

Position: FAV



STATE OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF STATE POLICE

OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL



Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor

1201 Reisterstown Road/C Building
Pikesville, MD 21208
410-653-8980
Fax 410-653-8988
Toll Free 800-525-3124

Colonel Roland L. Butler, Jr.
Acting Superintendent

Brian S. Geraci
State Fire Marshal

March 15, 2023

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
Maryland General Assembly
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB0907– Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarm-Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Dear Senator Feldman and Senator Kagan:

I am writing you today regarding SB 0970 Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms – Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act). This legislation was introduced following the devastating fire last month at a Silver Spring high-rise apartment complex that displaced over 400 residents, led to the hospitalization of 20 people, including firefighters and caused the tragic death of 25-year-old Melanie Diaz and her two dogs.

Fire dynamics have greatly changed over the last several years. Fires these days are much faster, hotter and produce more smoke that contains harmful chemicals that will kill you in a short amount of time. Having a fire of this nature in one of these non-protected high-rise residential structures impacts all of the residents which was seen last month in Silver Spring, Chicago, and last year in the Bronx New York where 17 people were killed to include eight children and across the country.

It is time to protect these residents and our firefighters in these dangerous buildings. This can be accomplished by installing automatic fire sprinklers. Just one sprinkler head last month would have controlled the fire or completely extinguished it prior to the arrival of the fire department. We would have not had any deaths or injuries or seen the number of displacements if that one sprinkler head had been in place.

The opposition to this bill will tell you that the cost to install these systems cannot be accomplished by these apartment and condominium associations. I will tell you that there is bills currently in congress that will provide funding for the installation of sprinklers in these occupancies. Research has shown that buildings with fire sprinkler systems are less expensive to own and manage than buildings without them.

This legislation has the full support of the Montgomery County Executive and County Council. The Maryland Fire Service also supports it, as this bill will save lives in these high-rise residential structures. Fire sprinkler systems deliver an initial level of safety for people and the building, allowing time for safe evacuation and limiting structural damage until the fire department arrives. I will leave you with this one last comment: **During a fire today, you have the least amount of time to safely exit your home than at any other time in history.**

Please think about this, give SB 0970 a favorable vote, and move it along in the process so we can start to save lives in these dangerous structures. Thank you for your time and attention should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian S. Geraci".

Brian S. Geraci,
State Fire Marshal

SB 0970 SFPC Letter of Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Brian Geraci

Position: FAV



Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor

STATE OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF STATE POLICE

FIRE PREVENTION COMMISSION

18345 Colonel Henry K. Douglas Drive
Suite 240
Hagerstown MD 21740
301-766-3899
Fax: 301-766-3889
<http://sfpc.mdsp.org>
msp.sfpc@maryland.gov



Colonel Roland L. Butler, Jr.
Acting Superintendent

Edward S. Tochtermann, Jr.
Chairman

March 14, 2023

Subject: SB 0970 Fire Protection and Prevention Testimony

My name is Edward Tochtermann, I am Chairman of the Maryland State Fire Prevention Commission and am testifying today on behalf of the entire Commission which totally supports the passage of SB 0970.

The fatal high-rise fire which occurred on February 18, 2023 in Montgomery County took the life of a young woman, displaced scores of building occupants and caused over a million dollars in damage. This same building also suffered a multi-alarm fire approximately 44 years ago.

SB 0970 gives high-rise building owners until January 1, 2033 to retrofit their buildings with automatic fire sprinklers. That date is comparable with the National Fire Protection Association Standard #101 "Life Safety Code" which our Commission and the Maryland State Fire Marshal's Office have been working to adopt.

SB 0970 also includes Baltimore City which is very important to protect the many citizens living in unsprinkler protected buildings which were built before July 1, 1974 when the current high rise sprinkler law became effective.

Thank you for your attention and should you have any questions I will do my best to answer them.

Very truly yours,

Edward S. Tochtermann, Jr.
Chairman

HB0062_FAV_CassandraGreetham.pdf

Uploaded by: Cassandra Greetham

Position: FAV

SB 0970 - SUPPORT
Cassandra Greetham
cassandra.greetham@gmail.com
954-850-0372

SB 0970 SUPPORT
Fire Protection and Prevention- Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms-
Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

March 15, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I am writing in support of the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Saves lives act (SB0970). As a friend of Melanie and the Diaz/Madera family, I believe it is urgent that the legislature do the right thing in acting towards the protection of our family and friends, and prevention of situations similar to the one that took Melanie's life.

On February 18th, 2023, the Diaz/Madera family tragically lost a huge piece of their heart, Melanie Diaz, in a fire in her high-rise apartment in Silver Spring, Maryland. Although the direct cause of the incident is unknown, it is believed by many, including firefighting professionals, that the correct implementation of fire safety protocol in the building could have stopped the spread of this fire that ultimately injured many and ended Melanie's life.

Since this tragedy occurred, I have spent hours with the family, as they plan memorial services, make arrangements for Melanie's belongings, and try to find a way to live in their new normal, all while trying to emotionally mourn the loss of their daughter. Although death is a normal part of life, there is nothing normal about parents having to make these arrangements for their own child, especially at the ripe age of 25. The mental and emotional strain that the family has endured can not be measured, but is being used to drive the motive to make a change so this type of tragedy can be prevented in the future.

From the time we are young and in school, basic fire safety such as "stop, drop, and roll" and "have a plan ready" is engraved in our brain. Although we keep this knowledge in our minds, it is only so useful when we don't have the proper equipment to provide us the protection in our homes. When we live in high-rise complexes, we rely on Bills such as this one to provide us that protection, as basic safety is a right, not a luxury. Installments of proper fire sprinkler/alarm systems, smoke detection, and inclusive systems for those who are visual and/or hearing impaired should be present in these buildings without any question. This equipment alone could have altered the outcome on February 18th, leaving us in a different position today. Between 2017 and 2019, there were an estimated 2,770 deaths due to fires in residential buildings. That would come out to approximately 13,850 deaths in a 10 year span, which is what we could potentially face if we wait until 2033 to make this change. The change MUST be made sooner, rather than later.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.



Cassandra Greetham
cassandra.greetham@gmail.com

SB0970 Testimonial.pdf

Uploaded by: Cathy Fink

Position: FAV

**Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer
2106 Cascade Rd.
Silver Spring, MD 20902**

**SB 0970 SUPPORT
Fire Protection and Prevention- Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I write in support of the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act (SB 0970). As a Silver Spring resident, I believe it is critical that the legislature takes action to protect people in similar situations better than the current law protected Melanie's life.

On February 18, 2023, Melanie Diaz died in a devastating fire at the Arrive high-rise apartment complex in Silver Spring. The fire displaced over 400 residents, led to the hospitalization of 20 people, including firefighters responding to the incident, and caused the tragic death of Melanie and her two dogs.

Melanie was 25 years old and had accomplished so much in her all-too-brief time on this planet. She was a truly kind, thoughtful, and caring human being. Her life ended suddenly, leaving friends, neighbors, and family to grieve her loss. This cannot be allowed to happen to anyone else.

We believe stronger fire safety protections could have helped slow the fire and smoke that caused her tragic death. This critical legislation would require high-rise residential buildings to install an automatic smoke alarm in each public corridor accessible by units in high-rise buildings beginning on July 1, 2023.

We urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

Sincerely,
Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer

SB970_FAV_Ruffo.pdf

Uploaded by: Christine Ruffo

Position: FAV

SB 0970 - SUPPORT
C. Christine Ruffo
Silver Spring, MD

SB 0970 SUPPORT

**Fire Protection and Prevention- Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee March 15, 2023**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I am a long-time resident of Arrive–Silver Spring, and I support the passage of SB 0970 (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act).

Thousands of people in my neighborhood—downtown Silver Spring—live in older high-rise buildings with insufficient fire safety systems. Before the terrible fire here on February 18 that took Melanie Diaz’s life, I don’t think many Arrive residents understood just how much our complex lacks compared with newer buildings. Some residents said they did not realize we do not have sprinklers. Many of us were shocked to realize a smoke-filled hallway would not trigger an alarm; that morning, a neighbor had to make his way through thick smoke to another floor to manually pull the alarm.

Sprinklers are essential, but until those can be installed, other measures included in this bill will greatly improve safety (hallway smoke alarms, in-unit extinguishers, mandated information about a lack of sprinklers included in leases, prohibiting landlords from requiring burdensome documentation before installing needed equipment for deaf and hard-of-hearing residents). We cannot wait 10 years for everyone to have sprinklers; we must require that those things that can be done quickly to improve safety, be done immediately.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

Sincerely,

C. Christine Ruffo

SB 0970 – SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Daniel Mora

Position: FAV

SB 0970 – SUPPORT
Daniel Mora
dannymora04@yahoo.com
954-873-0070

SB 0970 SUPPORT
Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms-Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environments Committee
March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Daniel Mora, I'm writing this letter in reference to SB 0970 SUPPORT, and my position is favorable on this bill. I am a family member of the Diaz's family and I am hoping this bill gets approved as soon as possible.

Melanie Diaz was a bright girl, only 25 years of age with a wonderful and successful future ahead of her. I had the pleasure of knowing and seeing her growing to become the great human being she was. Melanie was a wonderful daughter, sister, friend, student, teacher, mentor, and much more.

Passing this bill is not only necessary but also required in order to save lives from catastrophist events such as the one that took Melanie's life and injured others. This bill needs to be approved as soon as possible as we do not know the date and time when an unfortunate fire will take place. If this bill was passed years ago, Melanie would still be with us today. Let us not have other families deal with the pain we are going through now, when this horrific fire could have been avoided.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

SB0970_FAV_Owens.pdf

Uploaded by: Dylan Owens

Position: FAV

SB 0970 – SUPPORT

Dylan Owens

dylan@ounceofcare.com, 301-875-3943

SB 0970 SUPPORT

**Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms –
Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Dylan Owens, and I am a public health professional born and raised here in Maryland. I am also a friend of Melanie Diaz and her beloved partner, Michael Sobalvarro. On the morning of February 19th, I was informed about the devastating news that she and her two dogs lost their lives during the Arrive apartment complex fire on February 18, 2023, in Silver Spring, MD.

Melanie was the kindest soul who moved here to join the fight against climate change and make the world a better place. She fought bravely and was taken from us far too soon.

The Diaz family has endured what would arguably be anyone's worst nightmare. There is no reason why buildings should be allowed to lack basic protections in 2023, and in Melanie's honor, we have the responsibility to take immediate action on sprinkler system and smoke alarm regulation in order to prevent senseless tragedies like this one from happening in the future and destroying more lives.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

Sincerely,

Dylan Owens

HB0062_FAV_Williams.pdf

Uploaded by: Erik Williams

Position: FAV

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

SB 0970 – SUPPORT

Erik Williams

Email: ecwilliams915@gmail.com Phone: (202) 961-8489

SB 0970 SUPPORT

**Fire Protection and Prevention- Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms-
Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I am a resident of Maryland (Washington, D.C. before then) and in support of SB 0970 (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act). I do not represent a company, but I stand in solidarity with the family and friends of the deceased.

SB 0970 is necessary because, simply put, if you look at any new modern building sprinkler systems and smoke alarms are present. The purpose of smoke detectors is intended to provide early warning of fires while sprinkler systems are intended to provide warning and control the development of a fire. Had these systems been present I believe the fire at Arrive apartment complex that displaced the families and damaged 89 units as well as took the life of a thriving citizen (Melanie Diaz) could have been benign and saved the life of Melanie Diaz and her two pups.

I believe we all have a moral compass. If we search within ourselves, then I believe we all can agree this is the right thing to do. In conclusion, SB 0970 is a necessary bill that should pass to protect the lives of the very people you all promise to safeguard. I urge a favorable report on SB 0970. Thank you for your time and consideration.

melaniesbill.pdf

Uploaded by: Even Roblero

Position: FAV

SB1292- SUPPORT
Eveen Roblero
even.roblero@yahoo.com
(240)929-7742

SB0970 Written Support

**Fire Protection and Prevention-Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Even Roblero, I am a mother of four and I consider Melanie Diaz a sister to me having been in partnership with my brother for many years. Melanie Diaz was a sweet caring person, being a part of my family she always knew how to love my children. We celebrated many birthday occasions, graduations and holidays. The morning of Saturday, February 18th, my sister, Odalys informed me she was meeting up with Melanie and I was going to tag along not knowing hours later she was gone. She stayed with my grandmas in Silver Spring, Md often with my brother falling in love with Silver Spring and moving into the area. She felt safe and comfort in the community. Her dogs were her children and I cannot imagine how she struggled with her dogs following all the safe steps to get out of the fire. She had put a harness on both of her dogs and put the smaller one, Ella, in a pet carrier. It isn't fair to imagine people with disabilities or children or elderly people rushing out without a fair alarm system or sprinklers to reduce the smoke and give an opportunity of survival. Melanie was more than the woman who died in the Arrive Apartments, She was a selfless, honorable being who always stayed positive when moments were sometimes hard. That is why I support Bill SB0970.

SB0970_FAV_Weissburg.pdf

Uploaded by: Gabrielle Weissburg

Position: FAV

SB 0970 – SUPPORT
Gabrielle Weissburg
gabby.weissburg@gmail.com 410-300-4612

SB 0970 SUPPORT
Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms –
Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Ruxandra Andriescu and I am writing this in favor of bill SB 0970. I am a friend of Melanie Diaz, a medical student, and an Army officer. This bill must be passed in order to prevent senseless tragedies such as the loss of life of my dear friend and her two beloved dogs during the Arrive apartment complex fire on February 18, 2023 in Silver Spring, MD.

My hope is that no other family and loved ones will have to endure what the Diaz family did that day, for something that can be prevented with stricter sprinkler system regulations. This bill is urgent because tragedies like this can happen at any moment; without it, we are putting the lives of many innocent civilians at risk in buildings yet to be retrofitted with sprinklers.

Melanie was a wonderful young woman who left a great legacy of love and kindness in her passing. She was smart, witty, and full of life and did what she thought was best in that moment. We can't bring her back, but we have a responsibility to make the necessary changes in the wake of this tragedy to ensure that no other person or pet suffers the way the three of them did in last moments.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

SB0970_FAV_Shierholz.pdf

Uploaded by: Heidi Shierholz

Position: FAV

SB0970- SUPPORT
Heidi Shierholz
hshierholz@gmail.com
Phone: 202-257-2362

SB0970 Written Support
Fire Protection and Prevention-Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Heidi Shierholz and I am a Silver Spring resident, and neighbor of Melanie Diaz's fiancé, Michael Sabolvarro, and I am writing in support of SB 0970. On Saturday, February 18th 2023 an early morning apartment fire in Silver Spring MD resulted in the death of Melanie Diaz, a recent Georgetown alumna and current staff at Aspen Institute as a Program Coordinator within its Energy and the Environment Program. As a friend and neighbor over several years, I am deeply fond of Michael and his family, and grew to enjoy and appreciate Melanie as an integral member. My respect and admiration for Melanie grew as I learned about her principled life and work on climate change at the Aspen Institute, her love and care for animals, and her loving and total immersion in Michael's large family, as she became a cherished friend to Michael's siblings, nieces and nephews, and truly loved by Michael's mother, Maria, and grandmother, Linda.

When I was informed of Melanie's death, I was seized with shock, but the emerging details are enough to leave anyone gobsmacked with despair: I believe that Melanie was the only person who died as a result of the fire. It appears clear that Melanie did everything she was "supposed to do" in the event of such an emergency: she immediately harnessed her dogs, exited the apartment, and entered the nearest staircase. A stairwell door with evacuation signage is present immediately opposite what was Melanie's apartment door. She was found lying in the hallway two floors below her own unit, having succumbed to smoke inhalation, one arm protectively embracing the dogs she shared with Michael. She had removed her own jacket, wrapping it around the dogs to protect them from the smoke. I was among the family and neighbors who received Michael when he returned home from the apartment that Saturday. He emerged from

his car cradling the body of Melanie's dog Ella, his hands covered in black ash, and collapsed into the arms of his waiting family, weeping openly as he greeted each of them; his sisters, brother, mother, and extended family. It's just a devastatingly cruel reversal that, by Saturday afternoon, Michael had lost the future he envisioned for himself when he arose that morning. He lost his life-partner, and the world lost an engaged and hopeful person, a person our world cannot afford to lose right now.

As it happens, had the apartment complex in which Melanie lived had an up-to-current-code sprinkler and alarm system, she and the dogs would very likely be alive today. Tragically, Melanie's apartment did not have a smoke detector or sprinkler System. The hallways of the complex do not have a smoke detector. My understanding is that the alarm had to be manually activated by a resident who blindly crawled on all fours through the smoke in his hallway. He had to pull the alarm TWICE before it worked.

Sprinklers and smoke alarms are not something I pay much attention to as I move around in the world, and I doubt that many of us do. But as a witness to the heartbreak visited on Michael and Melanie's families, I cannot accept the idea of high rise apartments without modern means of effectively alerting residents to danger, mitigating the damage, and stopping the fire as close to the source as possible, as quickly as possible. I am aware that Montgomery County has had other high-rise fires in recent years in older buildings without modern systems. It is deeply unsettling to contemplate the potential for future loss of life, future heartbreak, future suffering if the need for building improvements is not addressed.

I urge a favorable report on SB0970.

Heidi Shierholz
721 Silver Spring Ave
Silver Spring MD 20910

Takoma Park 2023 - SB 970 FAV - Melanie Diaz Sprin

Uploaded by: Jessie Carpenter

Position: FAV



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

**SB 970
Support**

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

SB 970 Fire Protection and Prevention - Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms – Requirements

Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act

March 16, 2023

The City of Takoma Park supports and urges favorable consideration of Senate Bill 970.

Earlier this year, a tragic apartment fire in Downtown Silver Spring took the life of 25-year-old Melanie Diaz and her two dogs, displaced over 400 residents, and hospitalized 20 people, including firefighters. Almost 90 apartments in the building were condemned.

There are dozens of high-rise buildings in Montgomery County, including in Takoma Park. This legislation would provide necessary fire safety improvements in high-rise apartment buildings by:

- Requiring the installation of an automatic smoke alarm in each public corridor accessible by units in high-rise buildings beginning on July 1, 2023.
- Codifying into law that beginning January 1, 2033, each high-rise building regardless of construction date, shall be protected by a complete automatic sprinkler system.
- Prohibiting landlords from charging deaf or hard of hearing tenants for necessary accessible alarm systems; and from charging tenants for smoke alarm reimbursements.
- Requiring buildings to post a notice in all main building entrances and note in the lease if they do not have automatic sprinkler systems in place.
- Instructing the Department of Housing and Community Development to work with the State Fire Marshal and Maryland Department of Emergency Management to identify funding sources to help building owners meet these requirements.

This bill is important to Takoma Park because the City has experienced first-hand how traumatizing a fire in a multifamily family building can be. Residents expect to feel safe in their homes and assume that proper steps are taken to protect them. This bill takes a common sense approach to protecting lives.

The City of Takoma Park supports SB 970, and encourages a favorable vote.

TRESH-JOS-MD-SENATE-2023-03-16-r.pdf

Uploaded by: Joseph Tresh

Position: FAV

IN SUPPORT OF THE
MELANIE DIAZ SPRINKLERS SAVE LIVES ACT

Joseph Tresh

Arrive resident, Apartment 721A, directly adjacent to the fire
8750 Georgia Ave Silver Spring MD 20910
joe@joetresh.com

March 15, 2023

MARYLAND SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE

Dear Chair Brian Feldman, Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan, and Members of the
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I urge you to support Senate Bill 970, the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act. This bill will improve fire safety in high-rise buildings by requiring smoke alarms in public corridors, prohibiting landlords from charging deaf tenants for notification appliances, and requiring all high-rise buildings to have automatic sprinkler systems by January 1, 2033.

I awoke in my Arrive apartment 721A shortly before 6:00 am on the morning of February 18, 2023. It was quiet and dark morning, seemingly peaceful. The fire alarm wasn't sounding.

Soon after, I heard commotion coming from the hallway. I went to my door, looked through the peephole, and saw smoke in my hallway as I overheard my neighbors trying to fight a fire themselves. The fire alarm still wasn't sounding.

I opened my apartment door, entered the hallway, barely able to breathe as I opened the fire extinguisher compartment near my apartment. I did my best to scream to my neighbors that there was an extinguisher near me. I re-entered my apartment to alert my partner and prepare to escape the building. The fire alarm still wasn't sounding.

As we rushed to leave our apartment, our smoke alarm - only in our apartment - went off. I told my partner as soon as we leave we had to get it down on the ground and close the door behind us. We took a deep breath, opened the door to the hallway, and got below seven feet of black smoke to be able to see our escape route. The fire alarm still wasn't sounding.

(Continued)

IN SUPPORT OF THE
MELANIE DIAZ SPRINKLERS SAVE LIVES ACT

(Continued)

My partner and I crawled from our apartment door, through the hallway, past our neighbors and their burning apartment, finally to the exit staircase door. Even in that moment I was shocked and angry that the fire alarm still wasn't sounding.

We ran down one flight to the sixth floor where I pulled the fire alarm. In a couple of seconds the fire alarm started sounding.

What if I hadn't coincidentally been awake? What if I had slept long enough that the fire and the smoke would have been even more out of control? Why does it take an individual person to manually activate the fire alarm?

Why do developers buy buildings just to paint them in order to turn around and sell them again two years later? Why don't they invest in the safety of all of the residents?

The Arrive apartment building systems were working as intended, they tell us. Even if true, the system was a failure. Why can't we protect everyone? Melanie Diaz should not have been a victim of this terrible tragedy.

The arrive doesn't have sprinklers. The one connected smoke alarm on our apartment floor was about 175 feet away down three corridors from the burning apartment. Each corridor ceiling is separated by design features that trap smoke like a bulkhead. It's no wonder the fire alarm wasn't sounding.

It's clear that investors develop properties to the bare minimum as required by law. I urge you to consider it your responsibility to keep all Maryland renters safe. Senate Bill 970, the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act is a reasonable and needed step to help bring fire safety equity to Marylanders.

Thank you for your time.

Joseph Tresh

Councilmember Kate Stewart Support Testimony for S

Uploaded by: Kate Stewart

Position: FAV



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

KATE STEWART
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 4

March 15, 2023

Senate Bill 970: Fire Protection and Prevention - Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms - Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)
Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Brian Feldman, Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

As the Montgomery County Councilmember for District 4, I strongly support the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act (SB 970/HB 1292) currently under consideration in the Maryland General Assembly. This life-saving legislation aims to provide essential fire safety improvements in older high-rise apartments by requiring all buildings, regardless of construction date, to have a complete automatic sprinkler system installed by January 1, 2033.

Last month, an apartment fire in Downtown Silver Spring resulted in the tragic loss of 25-year-old Melanie Diaz and her two dogs. It displaced over 400 residents and hospitalized 20 people, including firefighters responding to the incident. Unfortunately, the apartment complex was one of the 76 high-rise buildings located in Montgomery County without automatic sprinkler systems.

Studies show that automatic sprinkler systems can reduce civilian deaths by fire by up to 87% and significantly decrease other negative outcomes, including property damage and environmental impact. While newer buildings now require them, many older high-rise apartments still lack this critical safety feature, putting residents at risk.

Senate Bill 970 is a significant step forward in protecting tenants living in older high-rise apartment buildings. It requires all high-rise apartment buildings, regardless of construction date, to have automatic sprinkler systems installed by January 1, 2033. Additionally, this bill mandates automatic smoke alarms in every public corridor by July 1, 2023; and requires notice in both the

lease and throughout the building if the complex has not yet been upgraded to include a full automatic sprinkler system.

Furthermore, Senate Bill 970 prohibits landlords from charging deaf or hard of hearing tenants for necessary accessible alarm systems and from charging tenants for smoke alarm reimbursements. It also helps building owners by requiring the Department of Housing and Community Development to work with the State Fire Marshal and Maryland Department of Emergency Management to identify funding sources to help building owners meet these requirements.

Installing automatic sprinkler systems in all high-rise buildings is essential to the safety and well-being of residents and in preventing future fire tragedies. I thank Senator Will Smith for sponsoring this bill and urge this committee to vote favorably for Senate Bill 970 this legislative session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Stewart
Montgomery County Council
District 4

SB MSFA Support Letter 0970.pdf

Uploaded by: Kathleen Loveless

Position: FAV

MARYLAND STATE FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Representing the Volunteer Fire, Rescue and Emergency Medical Services Personnel



Benjamin W. Kurtz
President
2130 Priest Bridge Drive
Suite 4
Crofton, MD 21114
(O) 443-302-2911
Email: bkurtz@msfa.org

Education, Energy, and the Environment
Senator Brian J. Feldman; Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan; Vice Chair
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

March 15, 2023

Greetings from the Maryland State Firemen's Association (MSFA). As President of the MSFA, I am pleased to be here to offer my written testimony in support of Senate Bill 0970; Fire Protection and Prevention - Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms - Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act).

"In 2019, the State Fire Marshal's Office determined that residential high-rise buildings that are not protected throughout by an automatic sprinkler system are a distinct hazard to life and property." This is not only an issue for residents of these buildings, but to the many fire and rescue personnel that are called to extinguish the fire.

By not having an automatic sprinkler system in place, the unprotected building increases numerous risks of uncontrolled combustion and lessens the ability for residents to remove themselves in a timely fashion. In the past, the time it took to escape a fire was far longer than today. One to two minutes is not nearly long enough to safely escape a burning residence after the smoke alarm signals. Automatic sprinkler systems increase an occupant's survival ten-fold.

For the safety of Maryland high rise residents as well as responding fire and rescue personnel, I ask for your favorable report on SB 0970.

Respectfully submitted,

Benjamin W. Kurtz
President, Maryland State Firemen's Association

SB 0970 Fire Protection and Prevention Favorable T

Uploaded by: Kathy Anderson

Position: FAV



Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor

STATE OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF STATE POLICE

FIRE PREVENTION COMMISSION

18345 Colonel Henry K. Douglas Drive
Suite 240
Hagerstown MD 21740
301-766-3899
Fax: 301-766-3889
<http://sfpc.mdsp.org>
msp.sfpc@maryland.gov



Colonel Roland L. Butler, Jr.
Acting Superintendent

Edward S. Tochterman, Jr.
Chairman

March 14, 2023

Subject: SB 0970 Fire Protection and Prevention Testimony

My name is Edward Tochterman, I am Chairman of the Maryland State Fire Prevention Commission and am testifying today on behalf of the entire Commission which totally supports the passage of SB 0970.

The fatal high-rise fire which occurred on February 18, 2023 in Montgomery County took the life of a young woman, displaced scores of building occupants and caused over a million dollars in damage. This same building also suffered a multi-alarm fire approximately 44 years ago.

SB 0970 gives high-rise building owners until January 1, 2033 to retrofit their buildings with automatic fire sprinklers. That date is comparable with the National Fire Protection Association Standard #101 "Life Safety Code" which our Commission and the Maryland State Fire Marshal's Office have been working to adopt.

SB 0970 also includes Baltimore City which is very important to protect the many citizens living in unsprinkler protected buildings which were built before July 1, 1974 when the current high rise sprinkler law became effective.

Thank you for your attention and should you have any questions I will do my best to answer them.

Very truly yours,

Edward S. Tochterman, Jr.
Chairman

SB 0970 MSP Letter of Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Kathy Anderson

Position: FAV



STATE OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF STATE POLICE

OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE
MARSHAL



Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor

1201 Reisterstown Road/C Building
Pikesville, MD 21208
410-653-8980
Fax 410-653-8988
Toll Free 800-525-3124

Colonel Roland L. Butler, Jr.
Acting Superintendent

Brian S. Geraci
State Fire Marshal

March 14, 2023

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
Maryland General Assembly
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB0907– Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarm-Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Dear Senator Feldman and Senator Kagan:

I am writing you today regarding SB 0970 Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms – Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act). This legislation was introduced following the devastating fire last month at a Silver Spring high-rise apartment complex that displaced over 400 residents, led to the hospitalization of 20 people, including firefighters and caused the tragic death of 25-year-old Melanie Diaz and her two dogs.

Fire dynamics have greatly changed over the last several years. Fires these days are much faster, hotter and produce more smoke that contains harmful chemicals that will kill you in a short amount of time. Having a fire of this nature in one of these non-protected high-rise residential structures impacts all of the residents which was seen last month in Silver Spring, Chicago, and last year in the Bronx New York where 17 people were killed to include eight children.

It is time to protect these residents and our firefighters in these dangerous buildings. This can be accomplished by installing automatic fire sprinklers. Just one sprinkler head last month would have controlled the fire or completely extinguished it prior to the arrival of the fire department. We would have not had any deaths or injuries or seen the number of displacements if that one sprinkler head had been in place.

The opposition to this bill will tell you that the cost to install these systems cannot be accomplished by these apartment and condominium associations. I will tell you that there are bills currently in congress that will provide funding for the installation of sprinklers in these occupancies. Research has shown that buildings with fire sprinkler systems are less expensive to own and manage than buildings without them.

This legislation has the full support of the Montgomery County Executive and County Council. The Maryland Fire Service also supports it, as this bill will save lives in these high-rise residential structures. Fire sprinkler systems deliver an initial level of safety for people and the building, allowing time for safe evacuation and limiting structural damage until the fire department arrives. I will leave you with this one last comment: **During a fire today, you have the least amount of time to safely exit your home than at any other time in history.**

Please think about this, give SB 0970 a favorable vote, and move it along in the process so we can start to save lives in these dangerous structures. Thank you for your time and attention should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Brian S. Geraci,
State Fire Marshal

Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony

Uploaded by: Leslie Frey

Position: FAV



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony
SB970 - Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms – Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)
March 16, 2023
SUPPORT

TO: The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair; The Honorable Cheryl Kagan, Vice Chair; and Members of the Education, Energy, the Environment Committee
FROM: Dr. Jeffery Johnson, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board (CAB), the County’s local, state, and federally designated anti-poverty group, is in full support of SB970 and asks the Committee for a favorable report. This bill would address an important safety issue by requiring all high-rise buildings to install automatic sprinkler systems by January 1, 2033 and requiring smoke alarms in all public corridors starting July 1, 2023. Residents will also be informed in writing through their leases and signs throughout the building when an automatic sprinkler system is not available.

The CAB supports this bill because it takes important steps to protect lower income residents, a disproportionate number of whom live in older buildings without the latest fire safety protections. Sadly, on far too many occasions, the Takoma-East Silver Spring (TESS) Community Action Center and the agency’s Navigation Unit have seen firsthand the devastating impact that fires and explosions have on lower-income residents. As part of the County’s Emergency Management Mass Care Operations team, Community Action staff and contractors work to address the immediate and ongoing needs of residents affected by these emergency situations. Our board receives regular updates on their incredible efforts, including their work addressing the needs of residents displaced by the recent fire at the Arrive Silver Spring apartment building, where Melanie Diaz, for whom this bill is named, was tragically killed.

Our board recognizes that the very high cost of housing in Montgomery County, and so many other parts of the state, is an important factor to consider. Lower-income residents often cannot afford to live in newer buildings that are already required to have sprinkler systems in place. According to the Maryland Community Action Partnership’s most recent report, the Montgomery County Self-Sufficiency Standard for a household with two working adults, one preschooler, and one school-age child is now \$122,943, over four times the federal poverty level.¹ This same family is estimated to need \$1,934 each month just to pay for housing. The extremely high cost of living often leaves lower-income residents with far fewer options for housing and other necessities. Basic safety measures should not be a luxury for those who can afford them; they should be

¹<https://maryland-cap.org/the-maryland-2023-self-sufficiency-standard-calculator/>

available to all residents regardless of income. We therefore encourage the Committee to explore other policies that will enhance safety and support lower-income residents, such as rental assistance and funding to help residents purchase renters insurance.

The CAB strongly supports SB970 and asks the Committee for a favorable report.

HB0062_FAV_Myers.pdf

Uploaded by: Lisa Myers

Position: FAV

SB907 SUPPORT
Lisa M. Myers, Esq.
Lisamyers2108@gmail.com
(301) 649-0607

SB 0970 SUPPORT
Fire Protection and Prevention- Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I write in support of the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act (SB 0970). As a Silver Spring resident, I believe it is critical that the legislature takes action to protect people in similar situations better than the current law protected Melanie's life.

On February 18, 2023, Melanie Diaz died in a devastating fire at the Arrive high-rise apartment complex in Silver Spring. The fire displaced over 400 residents, led to the hospitalization of 20 people, including firefighters responding to the incident, and caused the tragic death of Melanie and her two dogs.

Melanie was 25 years old and had accomplished so much in her all-too-brief time on this planet. She was a truly kind, thoughtful, and caring human being. Her life ended suddenly, leaving friends, neighbors, and family to grieve her loss. This cannot be allowed to happen to anyone else.

We believe stronger fire safety protections could have helped slow the fire and smoke that caused her tragic death. This critical legislation would require high-rise residential buildings to install an automatic smoke alarm in each public corridor accessible by units in high-rise buildings beginning on July 1, 2023.

We urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Myers, Esq.
2108 Cascade Rd.
Silver Spring, MD 20902

SB0970_FAV_Muldoon.pdf

Uploaded by: Lynn Muldoon

Position: FAV

SB 0970 Support
Lynn and Peter Muldoon
muldoons@verizon.net
301-518-8190

SB 0970 SUPPORT
Fire Protection and Prevention- Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I write in support of the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act (SB 0970). As a Silver Spring resident, I believe it is critical that the legislature takes action to protect people in similar situations better than the current law protected Melanie's life.

On February 18, 2023, Melanie Diaz died in a devastating fire at the Arrive high-rise apartment complex in Silver Spring. The fire displaced over 400 residents, led to the hospitalization of 20 people, including firefighters responding to the incident, and caused the tragic death of Melanie and her two dogs.

Melanie was 25 years old and had accomplished so much in her all-too-brief time on this planet. She was a truly kind, thoughtful, and caring human being. Her life ended suddenly, leaving friends, neighbors, and family to grieve her loss. This cannot be allowed to happen to anyone else.

We believe stronger fire safety protections could have helped slow the fire and smoke that caused her tragic death. This critical legislation would require high-rise residential buildings to install an automatic smoke alarm in each public corridor accessible by units in high-rise buildings beginning on July 1, 2023.

We urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

Sincerely,

Lynn and Peter Muldoon
2103 Cascade Rd
Silver Spring, MD
20902
muldoons@verizon.net

Scan20230315_14252579.pdf

Uploaded by: Marcelo Rojas

Position: FAV

SB1292- SUPPORT
Marcelo Rojas
machy8921@gmail.com
Phone: 240-893-8383

**SB0970 Written Support
Fire Protection and Prevention-Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)**

*Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 15th, 2023*

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Marcelo Rojas and I am a student at University of Maryland College Park and a close friend Melanie Diaz. The purpose of this testimony is two-fold: (1) to introduce to you who Melanie was and (2) provide brief background behind her loss and how the lack of a single sprinkler and functional smoke detector system led to her passing.

(1)

Melanie N. Diaz was born in Coconut Creek, Florida. Her parents immigrated from Venezuela, and even though they were low-income, they believed in the power of education and hard work. **Melanie loved Disney movies, dressed up as princesses, and dreamed of saving the planet from the dangers of climate change.**

In high school, Melanie was a top student. She had a 4.0 cGPA. She was selected by the US State Department to study abroad in China. Also, she raised over \$80,000 for cancer research. **She chose to attend Georgetown University and was awarded a full academic scholarship and became known on campus for her kindness.** She interned at Office of the Surgeon General and at NASA, where she helped leverage satellite imaging during natural disasters to help organizations know where to provide relief/resources.

No one would know Melanie's many accomplishments if they stood next to her. She was humble and kind. She never allowed anyone to feel left out- she would bring them into the conversation or physically into the circle. She was so caring, that at times, people overlooked her. But still, she chose kindness, because **Melanie believed that "it's easy to become bitter. It's tougher to choose kindness in a cruel world."** And Melanie did. She chose to love everyone, especially the vulnerable.

During college, she met Michael Sobalvarro and began visiting Silver Spring, Maryland. **Despite the pandemic, Melanie graduated with a Bachelor's of Science in Culture & Politics in 2021.**

After graduation, she got her dream job working at Aspen Institute in downtown Washington DC, in the energy and environmental sector. She moved to the Arrive buildings and adopted the

joy of her life, a rescue puppy named Ella. Melanie and Michael would take their dogs for walks, study together, and had big dreams of a future together. Melanie chose to live in Maryland (Montgomery County) rather than returning to sunny Florida, because **Melanie felt that Maryland was a state where one could not only develop professionally, but grow a family with Michael.**

(2)

Melanie passed away on February 18th, she lived on the 11th floor and was found in the 9th-floor hallway. **Melanie was found hugging her two puppies and had taken off her jacket to protect them from the smoke- even in her last moments, she put others first.** They took her down to the ambulance where she no longer had a pulse. She passed away at 6:36 AM.

Hours afterwards, her boyfriend Michael went down the same staircase Melanie passed away.

On the 11th floor, he found her flashlight, connected to her keys, still turned on.

On the 10th floor, he found her dogs' pee pads in a bag and her NorthFace hat from college.

On the 7th floor, he found one of her Nike's shoes.

On the 6th floor, he found another shoe.

Everything was blackened from the soot.

Melanie's apartment DID NOT HAVE A SMOKE DETECTOR or SPRINKLER SYSTEM. The hallways of the complex do not have a smoke detector. The alarm had to be manually pulled down TWICE to activate. Despite this, Melanie did everything she was supposed to: she immediately harnessed her puppies, exited the apartment, and entered the nearest staircase.

The purpose of this bill is to prevent lives from being lost since nothing is being handled in the interim. A single sprinkler in the unit could have prevented the loss of my fiancé's life. A single hallway smoke detector could have activated the building's alarm system- instead of depending on a resident risking his life to pull down TWO alarms. **A home is not a home if it is not safe.**

I urge a favorable report on SB0970.

A picture of the lovely Ms. Melanie Diaz



HB0062_FAV_OrtizPerez_Gershuny.pdf

Uploaded by: Maria Ortiz Perez

Position: FAV

SB907 SUPPORT
María Ortiz Pérez
maria.ortizperez@gmail.com
(301) 310 7594

SB 0970 SUPPORT
Fire Protection and Prevention- Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

We write in support of the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act (SB 0970). As co-workers of Melanie Diaz at the Aspen Institute for the last 1.5 years it is critical that the legislature takes action to protect people in similar situations better than the current law protected Melanie's life.

On February 18, 2023, we lost our friend and colleague Melanie Diaz in a devastating fire at the Arrive high-rise apartment complex in Silver Spring. The fire displaced over 400 residents, led to the hospitalization of 20 people, including firefighters responding to the incident, and caused the tragic death of Melanie and her two dogs.

Melanie was 25 years old and had been part of our team at the Aspen Institute for nearly two years. She was originally from South Florida, graduated from Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, and had interned at NASA, the Office of the Surgeon General, and Beeck Center for Social Impact before joining our team. Melanie accomplished so much in her all-too-brief time on this planet. More importantly than all that though – Melanie was a truly kind, thoughtful, and caring human being. She took care of her coworkers and friends. She always put others first. This cannot be allowed to happen to anyone else.

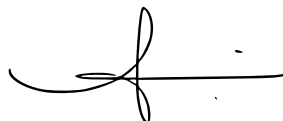
We believe stronger fire safety protections could have helped slow the fire and smoke that caused her tragic death. This critical legislation would require high-rise residential buildings to install an automatic smoke alarm in each public corridor accessible by units in high-rise buildings beginning on July 1, 2023.

We urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

Sincerely,



Greg Gershuny
Greg.Gershuny@gmail.com



María Ortiz Pérez
maria.ortizperez@gmail.com

SB0970 Support Fire Protection and Prevention Spri

Uploaded by: Mary Astudillo

Position: FAV

SB0970 – Support

Mary Astudillo

mastudilloht@yahoo.com

786-417-2966

SB 0970 SUPPORT

Fire Protection and Prevention- Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms

Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Mary Astudillo and personally knew Melanie Diaz and very close friends with her family in Florida. On February 18th, Melanie Diaz died at age 25 due to carelessness and lack of a sprinkler system and fire alarms in the apartment building she was living at the time. My intent is to ensure that sprinkler system be required including smoke alarms to prevent another tragedy, which should have been prevented. Melanie had a promising future ahead in her life which was cut short by this tragedy, she was a graduate from Georgetown University, an intelligent young woman beginning her career in DC. She was a happy vibrant woman who always brought a smile to others.

This bill is absolutely necessary to prevent another tragedy. These buildings have an obligation to provide safe housing now and not wait any further to install sprinkler systems and fire alarms. The tenants of these buildings pay their rent, and should be protected in the residence they live in. IF these buildings can not provide adequate housing, than they should not have the right to provide dangerous rental housing.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

Regards,

Mary Astudillo

MDAD SB 970 - Fire Protection and Prevention - Spr

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FAV



**Maryland Association of the Deaf
Written Testimony**

SB 970 - Fire Protection and Prevention - Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms - Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Thursday, March 16, 2023

Position: Favorable

President

Kirsten Poston

The Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD) is a statewide organization that protects the interests of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Marylanders regarding accessibility and equality issues.

Vice President

Tina Joyner

MDAD supports the bill, SB 970, that is sponsored by Senator Smith. There are approximately 1.2 million Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals living in the State of Maryland. We have heard many stories where the landlord would not purchase or obtain a smoke detector/fire alarm for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing tenants. Some landlords would make the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing tenant pay for it and are not reimbursed.

Secretary

Jacob Leffler

Treasurer

Board Members

Vikki Porter

Toyin Fasakin

Tisha Bera

Blaise Delahoussaye

Angela Rogers

Peter Un

Most recently, a Deaf woman who lived in the apartment building for several years in Silver Spring. The building was on fire in February 2023. She has asked her landlord several times for the fire alarm or smoke detector and her landlord refuses. She was lucky enough to have someone go into her room and wake her up to get out of the building as soon as possible. In our view, this violates her right to have reasonable accommodation and feeling safe at her own home.

Landlords need to be responsible for their buildings and units. They are the one who decides to allow a person to live in their home. If there is an issue with their home, the tenant must contact the landlord and the landlord will need to solve the issue. It is the same conception and responsibility with the smoke detector and fire alarm for a Deaf tenant. The landlords are responsible to make sure that all the tenants are in safe space with all the necessary devices.

For the sake of safety and peace of mind on Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing tenants, MDAD requests the favorable report of the bill, SB 970. This will make sure that landlords are responsible to provide the smoke detector or fire alarm according to the American with Disabilities Act.

MDAD Board of Directors

SB 970 - MoCo_Wenger_FAV (GA 23).pdf

Uploaded by: Melanie Wenger

Position: FAV



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

SB 970

DATE: March 16, 2023

SPONSOR: Senator Smith

ASSIGNED TO: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT PERSON: Melanie Wenger (melanie.wenger@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: Support

Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms – Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Montgomery County strongly supports Senate Bill 970 because the protections it would require could have helped slow the devastating fire last month at a Silver Spring high-rise apartment complex that displaced over 400 residents, led to the hospitalization of 20 people including firefighters responding to the incident, and caused the tragic death of 25-year-old Melanie Diaz and her two dogs.

Beginning July 1, 2023, Senate Bill 970 would require an automatic smoke alarm to be installed in each public corridor accessible by units in a high-rise building. Beginning January 1, 2033, the bill would require every high-rise building to be protected by a complete automatic sprinkler system unless all units in the high-rise building have exterior exit access or each unit of the building is equipped with a fire extinguisher. If a high-rise building is not protected by a complete automatic sprinkler system, beginning July 1, 2023, the owner of the building must conspicuously post written notice in the building warning that the building is not protected by a complete sprinkler system, and the owner must include in any lease agreement a conspicuous notice that the building is not currently protected by a complete automatic sprinkler system and that the building is required to be protected by January 1, 2033. Under the bill, the State Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is to identify funding sources that may be available to the owner of a high-rise building to aid the owner in installing a complete automatic sprinkler system. DHCD is to provide funding priority to high-rise buildings that plan to be protected by a complete automatic sprinkler system by 2028. Additionally, Senate Bill 970 prohibits a landlord from requiring a tenant who is deaf or hard of hearing to pay for the purchase or installation of a notification appliance that, when activated, provides a signal that is sufficient to warn the deaf or hard of hearing tenant in a sleeping room of a smoke alarm activation, and prohibits a landlord from requiring a tenant to provide documentation or evidence when the tenant requests such a device be installed.

In 2019, the Maryland State Fire Marshal highlighted the dangers of living in high-rise buildings without sprinkler systems, which have been shown to reduce civilian fire deaths by up to 87%. However, under current State law, older buildings are not required to have these sprinkler systems in place. Montgomery County has more high-rise buildings without complete automatic sprinkler systems than any other jurisdiction in the State. Senate Bill 970 is urgently needed to prevent further tragedies and is critical to the safety of Montgomery County residents and Marylanders across the State. Montgomery County respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 970.

SB 0970 SUPPORT Fire Protection and Prevention- Me

Uploaded by: Melissa Lorenzana

Position: FAV

SB 0970 SUPPORT Fire Protection and Prevention- Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act) Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Melissa Lorenzana and I'm in a favor of the bill SB0970. I'm a resident at Arrive Silver Spring and my unit was one of the condemned units due to the fire that occurred on Saturday, February 18.

This bill is necessary in order to protect people's safety in their home. When I moved into Arrive Silver Spring, I was under the impression the building was safe. I had no idea that the property management could have and should have done more to ensure safety for residents. The fire that occurred on Saturday, February 18th should have been contained if there were sprinklers inside the unit. Then, the many residents (including me and my family) would still have a place to live. Melanie Diaz's life could have been saved if Arrive Silver Spring had cared more about residents' safety rather than the aesthetics of the building inside and outside.

This bill needs to be passed now because it will prevent another tragic fire incident to occur that could potentially again displace residents and/or take someone's life. My family and I have had to deal with a lot since being displaced. It has been an emotional drain to have had to find a new place, replace furniture, and wash so many clothes to get the smell of smoke out. Again, this bill must be passed now! It's not fair this happened and many people are suffering the consequences because of Arrive Silver Spring lack of safety and accountability. In closing, I urge in favor on SB 0970.

Thank you,
Melissa Lorenzana
Unit 228A of Arrive Silver Spring

HB0062_FAV_Thomas.pdf

Uploaded by: Meryl Thomas

Position: FAV

SBO970 Written Support

Fire Protection and Prevention-Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms—Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and
the Environment Committee:

I am a neighbor of Melanie Diaz's fiancé, Michael Sabolvarro. I am writing in support of SB 0970. Melanie's life
was claimed in the 2/18/2023 fire at the Arrive Apartments in Silver Spring MD.

The apartment complex in which Melanie lived did not have an up-to-current-code sprinkler and alarm sys-
tem. The complex hallways did not have a smoke detector.

High rise apartments must have modern means of effectively alerting residents to danger, mitigating the
damage, and stopping the fire as close to the source as possible. Montgomery County has had other high-rise
fires in older buildings without modern systems.

It is our duty to make the buildings in our community as safe as possible.

I urge you to report favorably on SBO970.

Thank you for making our lives better,
Meryl Thomas
708 Silver Spring Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-585-9366
meryl.g.thomas@gmail.com

SB9070_Fav_MichaelAllen.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Allen

Position: FAV

SB907 SUPPORT
Michael P. Allen
Mpallen2108@gmail.com
(M) 301-919-3211

SB 0970 SUPPORT
Fire Protection and Prevention- Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I write in strong support of the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act (SB 0970). As a Silver Spring resident, I believe it is critical that the legislature takes action to protect people in similar situations so that this needless tragedy never occurs again.

On February 18, 2023, Melanie Diaz died in a devastating fire at the Arrive high-rise apartment complex in Silver Spring. The fire displaced over 400 residents, led to the hospitalization of 20 people, including firefighters responding to the incident, and caused the tragic death of Melanie and her two dogs.

Melanie was 25 years old and had accomplished so much in her all-too-brief time on this planet. She was a truly kind, thoughtful, and caring human being. Her life ended suddenly, leaving friends, neighbors, and family to grieve her loss. This cannot be allowed to happen to anyone else.

This critical legislation would require high-rise residential buildings to install an automatic smoke alarm in each public corridor accessible by units in high-rise buildings beginning on July 1, 2023. Had this legislation already been in place, we believe Melanie's life would have been saved.

You have the power to save lives, which is why we urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Allen

Michael P. Allen
Silver Spring, MD

Letter of Support-SB0907-1-Signed.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Custer

Position: FAV



Maryland Fire Marshals Committee

Michael Custer, Chairperson
(202) 425-1317
Michael.s.custer.civ@mail.mil

Derrick Ready, Vice Chairperson
(443)709-3634
Derrick.Ready@baltimorecity.gov

Roberta Kelly, Secretary
(410) 313-6040
rkelly@howardcountymd.gov

March 14, 2023

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
Maryland General Assembly
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB0907– Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarm-
Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Dear Senator Feldman and Senator Kagan,

The Maryland Metro Chiefs Fire Marshal Committee is made up of representatives from Fire Marshal offices across the State of Maryland. We work in collaboration with the Maryland State Fire Marshal's Office to advocate for strong and effective fire prevention and life safety measures to protect the citizens of the State of Maryland.

We are writing you today to submit our strong support for SB0907. Fire safety protections like these could have helped slow the fire spread in the devastating fire last month at the high-rise apartment complex in Silver Spring, MD that displaced over 400 residents, led to 20 being hospitalized (to include firefighters) and caused the tragic death of Melanie Diaz and her two dogs. The Maryland State Fire Marshal in 2019 highlighted the dangers of living in high-rise buildings without sprinkler systems, which have been shown to reduce fire deaths by up to 87%, but currently older buildings are not required to have these sprinkler systems in place.

Senate Bill 0907 would make significant lifesaving improvements during a fire emergency and would protect tenants living in older, high-rise apartment buildings. We believe this legislation is urgent to prevent further tragedies like the one experienced recently in Silver Spring and is critical to the safety of the citizens of our great state. Thank you for your consideration of this legislation and we respectfully ask the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee for a favorable report for SB0907.

Sincerely,



Michael S. Custer
Chairman Metro Chiefs Fire Marshal Committee

SB0970_FAV_Sobalvarro.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Sobalvarro

Position: FAV

SB1292- SUPPORT
Michael Sobalvarro
Ms243@georgetown.edu
Phone: 202-304-7886

SB0970 Written Support
Fire Protection and Prevention-Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Michael Sobalvarro and I am a student at Georgetown University School of Medicine and Melanie Diaz's fiancé. The purpose of this testimony is two-fold: (1) to introduce to you who Melanie was and (2) provide brief background behind her loss and how the lack of a single sprinkler and functional smoke detector system led to her passing.

(1)

Melanie N. Diaz was born in Coconut Creek, Florida. Her parents immigrated from Venezuela, and even though they were low-income, they believed in the power of education and hard work. Melanie loved Disney movies, dressed up as princesses, and dreamed of saving the planet from the dangers of climate change.

In high school, Melanie was a top student. She had a 4.0 cGPA. She was selected by the US State Department to study abroad in China. Also, she raised over \$80,000 for cancer research. **She chose to attend Georgetown University and was awarded a full academic scholarship and became known on campus for her kindness.** She interned at Office of the Surgeon General and at NASA, where she helped leverage satellite imaging during natural disasters to help organizations know where to provide relief/resources.

No one would know Melanie's many accomplishments if they stood next to her. She was humble and kind. She never allowed anyone to feel left out- she would bring them into the conversation or physically into the circle. She was so caring, that at times, people overlooked her. But still, she chose kindness, because **Melanie believed that "it's easy to become bitter. It's tougher to choose kindness in a cruel world."** And Melanie did. She chose to love everyone, especially the vulnerable.

During college, she met Michael Sobalvarro (myself) and began visiting Silver Spring, Maryland. Despite the pandemic, Melanie graduated with a Bachelor's of Science in Culture & Politics in 2021.

After graduation, she got her dream job working at Aspen Institute in downtown Washington DC, in the energy and environmental sector. She moved to the Arrive buildings

and adopted the joy of her life, a rescue puppy named Ella. Melanie and Michael would take their dogs for walks, study together, and had big dreams of a future together. Melanie chose to live in Maryland (Montgomery County) rather than returning to sunny Florida, because **Melanie felt that Maryland was a state where one could not only develop professionally, but grow a family with Michael.**

(2)

Melanie passed away on February 18th, she lived on the 11th floor and was found in the 9th-floor hallway. **Melanie was found hugging her two puppies and had taken off her jacket to protect them from the smoke- even in her last moments, she put others first.** They took her down to the ambulance where she no longer had a pulse. She passed away at 6:36 AM.

Hours afterwards, I went down the same staircase Melanie passed away.

On the 11th floor, I found her flashlight, connected to her keys, still turned on.

On the 10th floor, I found our dogs' pee pads in a bag and her NorthFace hat from college.

On the 7th floor, I found one of her Nike's shoes.

On the 6th floor, I found another shoe.

Everything was blackened from the soot.

Melanie's apartment DID NOT HAVE A SMOKE DETECTOR or SPRINKLER SYSTEM. The hallways of the complex do not have a smoke detector. The alarm had to be manually pulled down TWICE to activate. Despite this, Melanie did everything she was supposed to: she immediately harnessed her puppies, exited the apartment, and entered the nearest staircase.

The purpose of this bill is to prevent lives from being lost. A single sprinkler in the unit could have prevented the loss of my fiancé's life. A single hallway smoke detector could have activated the building's alarm system- instead of depending on a resident risking his life to pull down TWO alarms. **A home is not a home if it is not safe.**

I urge a favorable report on SB0970.



SB0970- SUPPORT-Mizraim Belman.pdf

Uploaded by: Mizraim Belman Guerrero

Position: FAV

SB0970- SUPPORT

Mizraim Belman Guerrero

mb2146@georgetown.edu

512-786-7335

SB0970 Written Support

Fire Protection and Prevention-Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements

(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Mizraim Belman Guerrero, and I knew Melanie Diaz from our time together at Georgetown University. Melanie was a kind, loving, and ambitious young woman. By 25 years old, she had graduated from Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service, had interned at NASA, and worked as a Program Coordinator at the Aspen Institute in the Energy and Environment sector. Melanie and I were both Culture and Politics students in the School of Foreign Service and floormates our freshman year. Melanie was always so kind and caring for others even in small passing interactions. She asked you how you were doing and would never hesitate to stop and listen to you. Melanie was passionate about the issues she cared about and continued to be an advocate throughout her time at Georgetown. She was an amazing student, friend, and person that we have tragically lost too soon.

Melanie and her two dogs passed away from injuries sustained in the Arrive Building apartment fire in Silver Spring, Maryland on February 18th. Melanie did everything she was supposed to: she immediately harnessed her two puppies, exited the apartment, and entered the nearest staircase to evacuate. Melanie's apartment **did not have a smoke detector or sprinkler system**. The building's alarm had to **be manually pulled twice to activate**.

Melanie's death was a tragedy. The Maryland State Fire Marshal said that the fire could have been put out if the building had installed sprinklers in apartment units. A single sprinkler in the unit where the fire started could have saved her life.

The purpose of this bill is to save lives and make homes safe. High-rise buildings in Montgomery County had until January 1, 2033, to install automatic sprinkler systems per the Maryland fire safety code. These changes need to be made much sooner. **A home is not a home if it is not safe.**

I urge a favorable report on SB0970.

Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Saves Lives Act.pdf

Uploaded by: Odalys Roblero

Position: FAV

SB1292- SUPPORT
Odalys Roblero
odalysroblero46@gmail.com
Phone: 240-475-0507

SB0970 Written Support
Fire Protection and Prevention-Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

Melanie was one of my best friends and sister. She was going to be my sister-in-law. The one who is supposed to be there when I have my first engagement, child, and house. We planned on seeing each other that Saturday morning (02/18/2023). Melanie was a person who organized, whenever we set up a time to hang out, she would call and text me days before to confirm. I woke up at 7 AM and looked out my window. I felt a little uneasy and went back to sleep. I woke up again at 9:00 AM and started to get dressed. I made breakfast and a little after 10 AM I called her, it went straight to voicemail. I called again for the second time and still no answer. I texted her and never received a text or call. I waited.

Not until hours later, my mother received a call about the news. I rushed to her apartment just to see at Ella and Samatha(her dogs) also passed away. They were the only ones that passed away. What imagine our Saturday would be like:

I wake up and get dressed. I put my dog's harness on and call Melanie. She answers and says she's ready for me to come over.

I drive over to her place and I go up to her apartment where we talk and get the dogs ready together and head over to Starbucks. I finally get to show Melanie my new matcha drink combo and get the dog's puppuccino.

We go to the dog park and watch the dogs run like crazy while we talk and record videos.

We go back to her place and make our plans like we talked about and wait for my sister to come by and visit Melanie as well.

But it didn't happen. It was supposed to.

One sprinkler. Only one would've stopped the fire and smoke from spreading.

Melanie did EVERYTHING RIGHT. she heard the alarm go off. she got the dogs ready and took the nearest exit staircase as instructed in her apartments. She deserved to live.

It is easy to send condolences for a person you did not know and move on but imagine if this was your sister. Imagine if it was your wife, mother, brother, son, or daughter. You would fight and keep on fighting until there is some justice so this does not happen to someone else. No, this will not bring Melanie, Ella, or Samantha back but there needs to be some justice for Melanie. She would've fight hard if the roles were reversed.

I love you so much melanie and I wish I could do the impossible to bring you back on to this earth for a little longer. I want one last hug and conversation. I want to tell you that I love you with all my heart and I will keep on going for you until we meet again. I want to go back in time

to relive some memories one last time. I never expected YOU to leave us so soon. You deserved to live un til 100 years. I will miss seeing you throw the ball for sammy and ella, you texting me to grab you some stuff from Petco for the dogs, going to Ulta, getting starbucks, our little dates are what I'm going to miss the most. You will forever and always be my bestfriend/sister. You deservered so MUCH MORE.

I would not wish this pain on anyone else so I urge a favorable report on SB0970.

HB0062_FAV_Roblero.pdf

Uploaded by: Odin Roblero

Position: FAV

SB1292- SUPPORT
Odin Roblero
odinrob4@gmail.com
Phone: 240-706-5786

SB0970 Written Support
Fire Protection and Prevention-Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee: Hi, my name is Odin Roblero and I am the brother of Melanie's fiancé (Michael Sobalvarro). Melanie was like a big sister to my siblings and I, she always found ways to bring a smile on everyone's face through any situation. She is the embodiment of purity and anyone that knew her would agree. I don't know how such a pure and kind human being could be taken away in an instant without a moment's notice. What I do know is that there should've been much more sprinklers in the apartment complex to prevent any misfortune to come someone's way. Which it did and that happened to be Melanie Diaz whom I consider a part of my family. I am here to support the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Saves Lives Act and think the laws on sprinklers and any safety protocols should be up to standard much quicker. I wouldn't want this to happen to anyone's family member or even themselves so please put yourself in my shoes. Thank you.



SB0970_FAV_Poznaniak.pdf

Uploaded by: Pearl Poznaniak

Position: FAV

SB 0970 – SUPPORT
Pearl Poznaniak
pjbanchuin@gmail.com (276) 393-0841

SB 0970 SUPPORT
Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms –
Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Pearl Poznaniak and I am writing this in favor of bill SB 0970. I am a friend of Melanie Diaz, a physician assistant, and new resident of Montgomery Country, Maryland. This bill must be passed in order to prevent senseless tragedies such as the loss of life of my dear friend and her two beloved dogs during the Arrive apartment complex fire on February 18, 2023 in Silver Spring, MD.

My hope is that no other family and loved ones will have to endure what the Diaz family did that day, for something that can be prevented with stricter sprinkler system regulations. This bill is urgent because tragedies like this can happen at any moment; without it, we are putting the lives of many innocent civilians at risk in buildings yet to be retrofitted with sprinklers.

Melanie was a wonderful young woman who left a great legacy of love and kindness in her passing. She was smart, witty, and full of life and did what she thought was best in that moment. We can't bring her back, but we have a responsibility to make the necessary changes in the wake of this tragedy to ensure that no other person or pet suffers the way the three of them did in last moments.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

Sincerely,
Pearl Poznaniak, PA-C

HB0062_FAV_McPherson-Watson.pdf

Uploaded by: Renee McPherson-Watson

Position: FAV

SB 0970 - SUPPORT
Dr. Renee McPherson-Watson
5542 NW 55th Terrace
Coconut Creek, Florida 33073
954.263.1996
reneemcphersonphd@gmail.com

SB 0970 - SUPPORT
Fire Protection and Prevention - Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms-
Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

I am writing this letter in support of SB 0970 - the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act. On February 18th, 2023 a parents' worst nightmare became a reality - to lose a child in a horrific tragedy and I am beseeching the committee to pass this bill so that Melanie's life and passing will not be in vain and to also save other innocent lives.

Our hearts are broken but comforted and appreciative to have experienced a life well lived, even though short, and to have been loved by her, warmed by her light and taught by her compassion for all. I have known Melanie and her family for a number of years ever since her and her brother were children and I have watched her grow up to be an amazing woman. Remembering Melanie, we are celebrating the life of a great young woman...a daughter, sister, cousin and friend to all. From the first day I met her, her warmth and light filled the room and my heart. Her smile and gentleness endeared all to whoever was blessed to come into her presence and her kindness and love came so naturally, genuinely and pure. I also hear the beautiful and heartwarming stories from everyone that knew her that provided a full picture of the constancy of her gentle, patient, kind, unwavering love and light. Melanie was not just a beautiful face but an intelligent, sweet, tender, patient and caring soul and we thank her for her love and examples of what an outstanding human being is. Melanie was truly the embodiment of an American dream. Her family came here from Venezuela to provide a better life for themselves and their family and Melanie was an American success story of opportunity and perseverance. She graduated Monarch High School in Coconut Creek, Florida with Honors and even had a feature in the Coconut Creek news highlighting her academic accomplishments including a school study opportunity in China and her destiny for greatness. Melanie then went on to Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. in pursuit of a college education at the esteemed University, thus, setting the

SB 0970 - SUPPORT
Dr. Renee McPherson-Watson
5542 NW 55th Terrace
Coconut Creek, Florida 33073
954.263.1996
reneemcphersonphd@gmail.com

foundation for a bright future career, which she then fulfilled with her position at the Aspen Institute. As you can see Melanie was always doing great things.

One of my fondest memories of Melanie was when she was about 18 and my daughter was about six and she wanted Melanie to play with her. Now most teenagers looking forward to college, grad night, senior festivities, prom and hanging out with friends - typically the last thing on their mind would be to play with a six year old. But not Melanie...Melanie was different, Melanie was special, Melanie was considerate, Melanie was gracious, Melanie was kindhearted, Melanie would get down on that floor and play with Legos and read books with my daughter like it was the most exciting thing in the world with such patience, gentleness and care. That was Melanie...an incredibly beautiful soul that had her whole life ahead of her to continue making an indelible impact on the world and it was cut short by a preventable tragedy. It is extremely ironic that such a bright shining light was extinguished by a fire that could have been contained and not taken any lives if only the building had automatic sprinklers in each unit and throughout the building and other fire safety measures. Although the tragedy already occurred, we must prevent a continuing tragedy of Melanie losing her promising life in vain. Please do not let this beautiful soul's loss of life go unaccounted and as devastating as it is, let this loss be able to have some greater purpose and bring some measure of healing to her family by preventing other loss of life by passing this bill I implore you. I am also urgently requesting for the bill to not only be passed but to mandate the installation of the sprinklers and implementation of fire safety measures within the next year as allowing too much time to pass between passage of the bill and the enforced enactment may again result in the senseless and avoidable loss of life.

I pray that we can get this bill passed in Melanie's name and that her legacy can live on knowing the love and lessons she has shown all to be blessed to have experienced her light was felt and appreciated and may we learn and be grateful and pattern our lives by her examples of love, kindness, curiosity, perseverance, hard work, loyalty, faithfulness, dedication, gentleness, decency and humility that made her our real life Angel on Earth. Now she has her Forever Wings and may her life and passage of this bill serve to save other lives. I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

Respectfully,

Dr. Renee McPherson-Watson

HB 1292 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Richard Kozel

Position: FAV



GOODRICH
FIRE & LIFE SAFETY



Official Website
www.goodrichfire.com

Adrienne A. Jones, Speaker of the House
H-101, State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Madame Speaker,

This letter is drafted to you in regards to HB 1292 Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms – Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act), a bill that at present is in the Maryland House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee. It is my hope to campaign for your support in moving this bill out of this committee and to the floor to be heard and voted on as soon as possible.

Had there been stronger fire and life safety protections in place, the tragedy that unfolded in Silver Spring last month as a result of the devastating fire at a high rise apartment complex -- displacing over 400 residents and taking the young life of Melanie Diaz (25 years old) and her two dogs – could have spared her life as well as the hospitalization of 20 individuals. The alarming toll of such an event prompted the urgent introduction of this legislation.

In instances of a fire in a structure, fire sprinkler systems immediately deliver a level of protection for people and property that is otherwise prolonged while waiting for first responders, allowing time for safe evacuation and reduction of structural damage. The historical success rate of sprinklers is unprecedented in life safety. It is in the interest of the general public of the great state of Maryland that Delegate Healey move this legislation along so lives can be saved from fire. I greatly appreciate your time and consideration of this correspondence, but most importantly this crucial piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Richard W. Kozel
President/Partner
GOODRICH Fire & Life Safety
MARYLAND SPRINKLER CONTRACTORS LICENSE NUMBER: MSC-598



1312 Decatur Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011



771-717-8010

SB0970_FAV_Andriescu.pdf

Uploaded by: Ruxandra Andriescu

Position: FAV

SB 0970 – SUPPORT

Ruxandra Andriescu

ruxandra.andriescu@gmail.com, 571-730-8221

SB 0970 SUPPORT

**Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms –
Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Ruxandra Andriescu and I am writing this in favor of bill SB 0970. I am a friend of Melanie Diaz, a medical student, and an Army officer. This bill must be passed in order to prevent senseless tragedies such as the loss of life of my dear friend and her two beloved dogs during the Arrive apartment complex fire on February 18, 2023 in Silver Spring, MD.

My hope is that no other family and loved ones will have to endure what the Diaz family did that day, for something that can be prevented with stricter sprinkler system regulations. This bill is urgent because tragedies like this can happen at any moment; without it, we are putting the lives of many innocent civilians at risk in buildings yet to be retrofitted with sprinklers.

Melanie was a wonderful young woman who left a great legacy of love and kindness in her passing. She was smart, witty, and full of life and did what she thought was best in that moment. We can't bring her back, but we have a responsibility to make the necessary changes in the wake of this tragedy to ensure that no other person or pet suffers the way the three of them did in last moments.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

SB0970 Written Testimonial.pdf

Uploaded by: Sophie Lockwood

Position: FAV

SB0970- SUPPORT
Sophie Lockwood
sophiemlockwood@gmail.com

SB0970 Written Support

**Fire Protection and Prevention-Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)**

*Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 15th, 2023*

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Sophie Lockwood and Melanie Diaz was one of my closest friends. She was a kind, loving, and ambitious young woman. By 25 years old, she had graduated from Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service, had interned at NASA, and worked as a Program Coordinator at the Aspen Institute in the Energy and Environment sector. We'd been friends since we moved into our freshmen dorm at Georgetown together.

Melanie and her two dogs passed away from injuries sustained in the Arrive Building apartment fire in Silver Spring, Maryland on February 18th. Melanie did everything she was supposed to: she immediately harnessed her two puppies, exited the apartment, and entered the nearest staircase to evacuate. Melanie's apartment **did not have a smoke detector or sprinkler system**. The building's alarm had to **be manually pulled twice to activate**.

Melanie's death was a tragedy. The Maryland State Fire Marshal said that the fire could have been put out if the building had installed sprinklers in apartment units. A single sprinkler in the unit where the fire started could have saved her life.

The purpose of this bill is to save lives and make homes safe. High-rise buildings in Montgomery County had until January 1, 2033, to install automatic sprinkler systems per the Maryland fire safety code. These changes need to be made much sooner. **A home is not a home if it is not safe.**

I urge a favorable report on SB0970.

SB 970 Support Testimony - Ludlow.pdf

Uploaded by: Suzanne Ludlow

Position: FAV

SB 970 – SUPPORT

Fire Protection and Prevention –
Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms
- Requirements
Education, Energy & the Environment
March 16, 2023

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 970, the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act.

Early in my life, I was impacted by a residential fire in a multi-family building and, since then, have always been concerned with fire safety measures. Now, I live close to an apartment complex that exploded and burned in 2016, which had multiple fatalities. One year ago, I had friends displaced from their apartment building by explosion and fire and saw firsthand the disruption to their lives and property, although they were not physically hurt. And, I live a short distance from the apartment building that claimed the life of Melanie Diaz just weeks ago.

NONE of these buildings had sprinklers and, under current law, none of them are required to have sprinklers! It is time to take the steps to retrofit our older high-rise buildings with sprinklers. And, yes, government should also help fund the retrofitting costs.

Not addressed in this bill is the problem of garden and mid-rise buildings not having adequate fire protection systems. Efforts need to be made to also improve safety systems in these other multi-family complexes.

One important component of SB970 is the requirement to provide – at no cost to the residents – visual or other fire notification mechanisms for residents who are Deaf or otherwise not able to respond to audible alarms.

I am amazed that the requirements provided for in SB970 do not already exist. Frankly, these requirements seem like they should have been in place since the 1960s, not in 2023. How many lives could have been saved? How many will NOT be saved if this legislation is not approved, even for a year?

Please SUPPORT Senate Bill 970, Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms – Requirements, the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act.

Thank you.

Suzanne Ludlow
8718 Geren Road
Silver Spring, MD 20901
SuzanneLudlow12@gmail.com

SB0970_FAV_Lewis.pdf

Uploaded by: Trey Lewis

Position: FAV

SB 0970

Trey Lewis

trey.lewis1@gmail.com | (954) 857-1392

SB 0970 SUPPORT

Fire Protection and Prevention- Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15th, 2023

Dear Char Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Member of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

Paragraph 1: My name is Trey Lewis, an individual, and I am writing to you in support of passing this bill SB 0970 to become law. As an employee of a Property Management company myself, and as a personal friend of Melanie Diaz, I have insight into the easily preventable circumstances and issues that this bill intends to resolve. My goal in writing to you is for you to see the importance of this bill, in that it will bring fire and safety measures that can save countless lives from negligence of the Landlords and property managers.

Paragraph 2: Firstly, I see how lax the law is around safety requirements in residential and commercial leases, of which includes apartment buildings. There are no requirements to furnish apartments or apartment buildings with fire safety measures, aside from requiring staircases. In regards to high-rise buildings specifically, a staircase on its own is not enough of a safety precaution – sprinkler systems, automatic fire and automatic smoke alarms are just a few of the most basic types precautionary measures that can be taken (with only a minor cost to the Landlords comparatively) that will have a large benefit to the tenants and residents of these buildings. Ensuring the safety of its residents is the responsibility of the Landlords, and it is the responsibility of the governing bodies presiding over these Landlords to enforce these laws and policies surrounding safety that will ultimately lead to a safer tomorrow. As I previously stated, these are not only the views of myself as a resident of buildings, but also on the property management side – I have a unique perspective that gives me insight into exactly how little is required of a Landlord to ensure the safety of its tenants. I also can see the financial aspects of a Landlord, which shows that they have liquid accounts for expenses such as these in the case of needing repairs or renovations; this proves that Landlords have the financial capacity to integrate at a minimum, smoke detectors and sprinkler systems. Even if the sprinkler systems are only set up within hallways, that is still an immense help in preventing fires from spreading

quickly, which will enable more people to reach safety. Passing a bill that prevents the death of innocent people, like my friend Melanie, is something that should be passed as soon as possible. The question should not be if we can help save more lives, but how soon can we start saving them.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

Letter.pdf

Uploaded by: Varsha Menon

Position: FAV

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I am a concerned citizen who was friends with Melanie Diaz, who died tragically in the apartment fire in Silver Spring, Maryland. This tragedy could have easily been prevented had there been sprinklers in each apartment to douse the fire. Basic safety mechanisms should be a requirement, not a luxury, for housing within Montgomery County and Maryland as a whole.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970, so that residential complexes can be equipped with the appropriate safety tools immediately, not until 2033- almost 10 years later.

Sincerely,

Varsha Menon

sb support.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Victoria Taillac

Position: FAV

SB 0970 – SUPPORT
Victoria Taillac
toritaillac@yahoo.com

SB 0970 SUPPORT
Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms –
Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Victoria Taillac and I am writing this in favor of bill SB 0970. I am a friend of Melanie Diaz and an emergency physician associate. This bill must be passed in order to prevent senseless tragedies such as the loss of life of my dear friend and her two beloved dogs during the Arrive apartment complex fire on February 18, 2023 in Silver Spring, MD.

My hope is that no other family and loved ones will have to endure what the Diaz family did that day, for something that can be prevented with stricter sprinkler system regulations. This bill is urgent because tragedies like this can happen at any moment; without it, we are putting the lives of many innocent civilians at risk in buildings yet to be retrofitted with sprinklers.

Melanie was a wonderful young woman who left a great legacy of love and kindness in her passing. She was smart, witty, and full of life and did what she thought was best in that moment. We can't bring her back, but we have a responsibility to make the necessary changes in the wake of this tragedy to ensure that no other person or pet suffers the way the three of them did in last moments.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Vikash Dodani

Position: FAV

SB0970- SUPPORT

Vikash Dodani

vikashmdodani@gmail.com

(973) 204-1952

SB0970 Written Support

Fire Protection and Prevention-Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms- Requirements

(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15th, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Vikash Dodani and I profoundly knew Melanie Diaz as a great friend, from her first days at Georgetown University where we lived on the same freshmen floor together and working alongside her as a partner to help lead Georgetown's 2018 orientation program. Melanie was a kind, loving, and ambitious young woman. By 25 years old, she had graduated from Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service, had interned at NASA, and worked as a Program Coordinator at the Aspen Institute in the Energy and Environment sector. She was truly a shining star of the Georgetown community and was one of the most genuine friends a person could have.

Melanie and her two dogs passed away from injuries sustained in the Arrive Building apartment fire in Silver Spring, Maryland on February 18th. Melanie did everything she was supposed to: she immediately harnessed her two puppies, exited the apartment, and entered the nearest staircase to evacuate. Melanie's apartment **did not have a smoke detector or sprinkler system**. The building's alarm had to be **manually pulled twice to activate**.

Melanie's death was a tragedy. The Maryland State Fire Marshal said that the fire could have been put out if the building had installed sprinklers in apartment units. A single sprinkler in the unit where the fire started could have saved her life.

The purpose of this bill is to save lives and make homes safe. High-rise buildings in Montgomery County had until January 1, 2033 to install automatic sprinkler systems per the Maryland fire safety code. These changes need to be made much sooner. **A home is not a home if it is not safe.**

I urge a favorable report on SB0970.

SB0970_FAV_Jun-2.pdf

Uploaded by: Young Jun Jun

Position: FAV

SB 0970 - SUPPORT

Young Jun Jun

Maybach11@gmail.com

201-407-5002

SB 0970 SUPPORT

Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms
Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Young Jun Jun and I am writing to express my support in favor of bill SB0970.

Melanie Diaz was a friend of mine and an incredible human being with a promising future. She had the passion and compassion to help her community and give back. Sadly she passed away in a fire in her apartment building, which could easily have been avoided with fire detectors, fire alarms, and sprinklers. She was only 25 years old and to further prevent the unjust loss of any life, I urge the local governments of Maryland and Montgomery County to pass any and all legislation in support of strengthening safety precautions against fires.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

SB0970_FAV_Zhou.pdf

Uploaded by: Yuan Zhou

Position: FAV

SB 0970 - SUPPORT

Yuan Zhou

Yuanzhou252@gmail.com 4023210165

SB 0970 SUPPORT

**Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 15, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Yuan Zhou and I am writing to express my personal support in favor of bill SB-0970.

Melanie Diaz was a friend and her passing was a loss to our community. She had worked passionately to promote a better world both in her personal and professional relationships. But those projects will sadly never come to pass due to a regrettable and entirely avoidable fire, and her life was mercilessly cut short at the young age of 25. I urge the local governments of Maryland and Montgomery County to pass any and all legislation in support of strengthening safety precautions against fires.

I urge a favorable report on SB 0970.

HB0062_FAV_Diaz.pdf

Uploaded by: Zuleika Madera

Position: FAV

SB 0970 - SUPPORT
Cesar Diaz
Zuleika Madera
Cesar Diaz
zuleika9@msn.com
954-990-9551

SB 0970 SUPPORT
Fire Protection and Prevention- Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms-
Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

March 15, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

We write in support of the Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act (SB 0970). As the direct family of Melanie Diaz, we find it critical that the legislature takes actions in order to protect and prevent detrimental scenarios similar to that of which have taken Melanie's life, from happening to other people in the future.

On February 18th, 2023 we lost our loving daughter, sister, and friend to many due to a fire in her high-rise apartment building in Silver Spring, Maryland. This tragedy left many residents displaced, multiple injuries, and of course the devastating loss of Melanie and her two dogs Ella and Samantha.


Melanie was a ray of sunshine, always bringing brightness and positivity to those around her. Our family was lucky to have been able to spend 25 beautiful years with her, but are absolutely crushed that we will be spending the rest without her. There is no way for anyone to prepare for the pain of losing a loved one, especially one whose life was still so fresh and new. However, when there are ways to prevent tragedies such as the one our family has been living since that dreadful day, why not take that to our advantage?

We strongly believe that the awareness about fire safety, protocol, and protection equipment would have likely changed the outcome of this incident, and Melanie would be here with us to fight for this change. Soon after this event, Maryland State Fire Marshal Brian Geraci exclaimed that even one sprinkler head could have prevented the spreading of this deadly fire. If information like this is known by Fire professionals, then we should be applying it to prevent future tragedy and loss of those we love. This would include implementing sprinkler and alarm systems in our high-rise buildings, as well as safety solutions for those who are visual and/or hearing impaired. The sooner we make the change, the sooner we make a difference. 2023 is too late, how many lives will be lost if we wait until 2033?

Imagine taking a walk in our shoes as we grieve the loss of our daughter and sister Melanie, and allow that to fuel your want to make a difference in future fire prevention.

We urge a favorable report on SB 0970.


Cesar Diaz


Zuleika Madera
zuleika9@msn.com


Cesar Diaz

AOBA -- SB 970-- UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: Brian Anleu

Position: UNF



Bill No: SB 970— Fire Protection and Prevention - Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms - Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Date: 3/16/2023

Position: Unfavorable

The Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington (AOBA). AOBA's members own or manage over 23 million square feet of commercial office space and 133,000 apartment rental units in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. **AOBA submits testimony to urging an unfavorable report to SB 970.**

Senate Bill 970 would require the installation of smoke alarms in public corridors accessible by units in high-rise buildings beginning July 1, 2023. Additionally, a high-rise building owner must post a notice in the building if a complete automatic sprinkler system does not protect the building. The bill prohibits a housing provider from requiring a resident with a hearing disability to pay for the purchase or installation of a notification appliance or provide any supporting documentation for a need of a notification appliance. SB 970 establishes that by January 1, 2033, each high-rise building, regardless of the date of construction, must be protected by a complete automatic sprinkler system installed, and, in the interim, each unit must be equipped with a fire extinguisher.

AOBA understands the need to keep residents safe and ensure buildings have fire prevention systems to prevent injuries or deaths. AOBA members have taken the necessary measures to keep residents safe by remaining compliant with local and state code enforcement laws and maintaining all fire safety equipment in good working order. However, this legislation seeks to increase the cost for individuals living in high-rise buildings and codify into law the State Fire Marshal's mandate to retrofit all existing buildings with an automatic sprinkler system.

1. Background

The State of Maryland initially addressed fire safety and sprinklers in 1974. Maryland General Assembly passed legislation to require all high-rise buildings constructed after July 1, 1974, to be installed with a complete automatic sprinkler system. Similarly, the State fire law requires newly constructed residential facilities, including multi-family communities, for which a building permit is issued on or after July 1, 1990. The State Legislature authorized the Fire Commission to make individualized assessments regarding fire risks posed by high-

rise buildings constructed before 1974. Under current state law, the commission must determine whether a high-rise building has an existing inimical hazard in the building built before 1974. Upon discovering a hazard, the commission will require necessary sprinkler retrofits in the building to avoid fire risks.

The Maryland Fire Prevention Commission convened a task force in 2017 to create recommendations to address the fire safety issue involving sprinklers in high-rise buildings, in which AOBA participated as a group member. The task force suggested four options but could not come together on any one suggestion. The group's four options were:

- Option 1 - Provide a complete building fire suppression system;
- Option 2 - Compliance with NFPA 101 for Existing High-rise Residential Occupancies (effectively requiring all dwelling units to have an exit directly to the exterior);
- Option 3 - Compliance with a set of parameters developed by the task force, which include provisions for: standpipes, a fire department elevator, protection of cooking equipment, smoke alarms, protection of exit access corridors, protection of vertical openings, and separation of hazards, elimination or mitigation of risks associated with a combustible exterior finish material, maintenance of means of egress, maintenance of manual fire alarm systems, and standby power; or,
- Option 4 – Compliance with the standpipe, FD elevator, cooking protection, and combustible exterior mitigation features of Option 3. Additionally, alarms would have to sound throughout the building, and in structures greater than 10 stories above grade, emergency power would be provided for at least one FD elevator.

In August 2019, the Maryland State Fire Prevention Committee determined that existing residential high-rise buildings not protected by an automatic sprinkler system are a distinct hazard. The State Fire Marshal then issued a statewide mandate that all existing high-rise buildings be brought into compliance with the Fire and Life Safety Codes, as adopted and amended, by January 1, 2033.

2. Cost Associated with Retrofitting Existing Buildings with a Sprinkler System

After recovering from high inflation costs and the coronavirus pandemic, AOBA members are experiencing significant financial hardships and economic viability. With the increased operating cost and historically high rent delinquencies, SB 970 will make it infeasible for housing providers to comply with the strict mandates described in the bill. To put the fiscal pressures into perspective, one member company with a portfolio of 2,969 apartment homes in the County currently carries a total delinquency of \$2,651,267. The total delinquency for the portfolio is slightly over \$5.2 million, comprising over 10,000 apartment homes. **In short, approximately 30% of the portfolio makes up 50% of the delinquency.**

The chart in the appendix is an actual cost estimate for a recently completed project on one of our member's properties. This chart illustrates a comprehensive picture of expenses for retrofitting existing buildings. The costs include but are not limited to materials, permitting fees, labor, and testing as a part of the retrofit implementation process. All these factors for one 310-unit property cost \$3.9 million. This bill will worsen conditions for many housing providers operating in the State as the cost associated with retrofitting existing high-rise buildings will be astronomical. Furthermore, this will impact many residents, specifically

lower-income and rent-burden renters, that will see increases in their rent. Thus, making it hard to afford where they live and increasing displacement for many families impacted by this state law.

In addition, the New Jersey Apartment Association commissioned an analysis of the State's 2007 proposal to require the retrofit of existing high-rise residential buildings with a complete automatic fire sprinkler system. The analysis concluded that New Jersey's proposal was not effective in addressing the fire safety issue in high-rise buildings and the State withdrew from considering the proposal for the following reasons:

- **Economic Impact:** The report calculated that implementing this mandate would cost roughly \$1.32 billion to \$1.8 billion statewide. This cost would be passed on to renters and burden them with \$200-\$400 per month in their rent.
- **Social Impact:** The report concluded that the State needed to fully consider the social impact of this proposal, specifically the costs associated with relocating residents during the construction phase. Moreover, many of the renters that live in cities throughout New Jersey dedicate a third of their income toward rent; thus, upon adoption, this mandate will further burden renters, including lower-income residents.
- **Safety Risks in High-Rise Apartment Buildings:** Existing safety codes and state regulations adequately provide a framework for addressing the risk of fires in high-rise buildings. There is no evidence to suggest fire suppression would result in a decrease in fire-related deaths or injuries.

3. What are other States doing to address this Issue

California, Maryland, and Washington, DC, have adopted a fire sprinkler mandate for high-rise buildings. In California, local code requires an automatic sprinkler system to be installed throughout existing high-rise buildings, except for airport traffic towers, open parking structures, and occupancy groups. Washington, DC, requires automatic sprinkler systems in buildings with one or more stories with an occupant load of 30 or more located 55 feet or more above the lowest level of fire department vehicles. SB 970 is the most stringent of the three compared to other jurisdictions. It is important to note that the Cities of New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia had considered similar policies for installation of sprinkler systems in existing high-rise buildings but decided against it. Instead, the municipalities favored code requirements that focused on the importance of containment, early warning, and safe evacuation the risk accompanied with fires in high rises buildings as opposed to imposing increased costs on communities.

For these reasons, AOBA urges an unfavorable report on SB 970. For further information, contact Brian Anleu, AOBA Vice President of Government Affairs, at 240-381-0494 or banleu@aoba-metro.org.

NJAA sprinkler retrofit analysis 2007.pdf

Uploaded by: Brian Anleu

Position: UNF



**ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO
STATE FIRE PREVENTION CODE TO MANDATE
THE INSTALLATION OF FIRE SUPPRESSION
SYSTEMS IN HIGH-RISE RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS**

Prepared on behalf of
New Jersey Apartment Association



DECEMBER 17, 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT

- I. Background Regarding Rule Proposal 3**
- II. Analysis of Existing Fire Safety Code 5**
- III. State-wide Statistics Regarding Fire-Related Deaths and Injuries 7**
- IV. Implementation Costs 10**
- V. Automatic Fire Suppression Systems Are Not Fully Reliable 13**
- VI. Comparison of Other Governmental Action in this Area 14**
 - A. City of Philadelphia 14**
 - B. New York City 15**
 - C. City of Chicago 16**
- VII. Conclusion 17**

APPENDIX

- Resume of Stephen F Finkelman, P.E. 19**
- References 20**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New Jersey Apartment Association (“NJAA”) retained CMX to assess the impact the amendments proposed by the Department of Community Affairs (“DCA”) to revise the State Uniform Fire Code (39 N.J.R. 3908(a)) would have on existing high-rise residential apartment buildings. Specifically, DCA has proposed to amend N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.17 to require existing high-rise buildings of Group B (business or office) and Group R-2 (residential) to be equipped with approved automatic fire suppression systems (better known as fire sprinkler systems) in accordance with the Uniform Construction Code. DCA states in general terms that this amendment is intended address the risk these buildings present during a fire to its occupants and firefighters. However, the rule proposal indicates DCA only conducted a cursory analysis of the social and economic impacts associated with the implementation of this rule, and thus the support provided by DCA in connection with this rule proposal is not instructive.

In light of the fact that there does not appear to be much in the form of empirical data provided by DCA to support this rule proposal, NJAA requested CMX to provide a report that describes how this rule proposal will be implemented, including an analysis of the costs associated with installing fire suppression systems in existing high-rise apartment buildings in the State. From an economic standpoint, it is clear that the impact of this rule proposal will be substantial, and the ultimate cost will be borne by those who live in these high-rise residential buildings. Specifically, it is anticipated this rule proposal may result in an increase of \$200 to \$400 per month in rent (or \$2400 to \$4800 per year), thereby increasing the amount of income the average renter must dedicate to rent to burdensome and unaffordable levels approaching 50% of an average renter’s total income (median annual income of renters in New Jersey is \$37,662). Since there is no provision providing for public funding to defray the costs associated with implementing this rule, from an economic standpoint, it is difficult to associate any positive impact with this rule proposal.

NJAA also asked us to determine, from a public safety standpoint, what added benefits would be realized upon implementation. After a review of existing public safety standards, it is clear that existing fire safety standards more than adequately address the risk associated with fires in high-rise apartment buildings. Indeed, there is no mention by DCA in its rule proposal suggesting otherwise. And, there is no indication that DCA considered that high-rise apartment buildings are constructed in a way to contain fires so to avoid the risk of serious injury and death from such fires. It is also clear

that fire sprinklers are not always reliable, especially in a residential setting, and are generally installed to minimize property damage caused by a fire rather than safeguarding lives. Therefore, it is unlikely that fire sprinkler systems will make high-rise residential buildings in New Jersey safer than they already are if they are in compliance with existing fire safety standards.

Since the added benefit of having high-rise apartment complexes retrofitted with fire sprinklers to address the risk associated with fires in those buildings does not outweigh the social and economic impact to the community at large and the tenants of such buildings, the rule proposal should be withdrawn. Instead, it would be more beneficial from a public safety and economic standpoint if DCA focused its efforts on ensuring full compliance with its existing fire safety codes. Thus, it is the opinion of this author, to a reasonable degree of engineering certainty, that the adoption of the proposed amendment N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.17 should be removed from the proposed amendments to the Uniform Fire Code N.J.A.C. 5:70.

ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT

I. Background of Rule Proposal

On September 17, 2007, DCA issued a rule proposal (39 N.J.R. 3908(a)) with the stated intent to update Subchapter 3 of the Uniform Fire Code (N.J.A.C. 5:70-3), the State Fire Prevention Code. Specifically, DCA proposes replacing the 1996 BOCA Fire Prevention Code with the 2006 International Fire Code (“IFC”), retain provisions of the current Fire Prevention Code and eliminate any conflicts with the Uniform Construction Code, N.J.A.C. 5:23. DCA dedicated over a 100 pages to implement this task. However, in approximately 3 pages, DCA proposes its most substantial change to a single provision of the Uniform Fire Code, but to Subchapter 4, hereinafter referred to as the “Fire Safety Code” (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4). In particular, DCA proposes to amend N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.17(b) to add the following underscored language:

All high rise buildings of Use Groups M and R-1 shall be equipped throughout with an approved automatic fire suppression system installed in accordance with the New Jersey Uniform Construction Code. By the fourth anniversary of the effective date of the rule, all high rise buildings of Use Group B and R-2 shall be equipped throughout with an approved automatic fire suppression system installed in accordance with the New Jersey Uniform Construction Code.

DCA described its rationale for the amendment to N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.17(b) as follows:

It has long been known that high rise buildings represent a special hazard in that escape, rescue and firefighter operations are hampered by the height of the building. Recent fire losses in other states highlight the risks presented by high-rise fires.

In the “Social Impact” statement accompanying the rule proposal, DCA states as follows:

The Department anticipates that the proposed amendments would have a positive solid impact by enhancing fire safety. Adoption and enforcement of the most current fire prevention requirements will ensure that existing buildings are maintained in safe condition. This benefits all of the State’s citizens. The proposed rule requiring suppression systems in highrise buildings will protect the occupants of highrise office and apartment buildings, and the firefighters who response to fires in those buildings.

While DCA acknowledges the cost associated with this rule change “may be significant,” it fails to indicate whether it conducted any particular economic analysis in reaching that conclusion. In its “Economic Impact” statement, DCA notes as follows:

The Department anticipates that the proposed amendments would have an economic impact on some existing buildings in the State. The cost will depend on the use of the building, whether it currently is in compliance with the applicable provisions of the State Fire

Prevention Code and what new requirements are proposed for that use. The State Fire Prevention Code establishes requirements for the safe maintenance of existing buildings. These are not retrofit requirements. However, repairs to existing fire safety systems may be necessary to comply. And where a system cannot be repaired, replacement may be necessary. The requirement for safe maintenance of existing buildings is not new with these proposed amendments. The proposed amendments update the existing requirements of the State Fire Prevention Code. The Summary above itemizes the proposed changes.

The cost to retrofit existing highrise office and residential buildings *may be significant*. The fact that all highrise buildings already are required to have wet standpipes in place serves to mitigate that cost in that these standpipes will serve as sprinkler system risers. There will be an additional cost for fire pumps, where necessary, and for enhancements to the building's existing alarm system. The cost may vary greatly based on the configuration of the building, the availability of adequate water pressure, the presence of a partial sprinkler system in the building and other factors. However, it is the Department's position that, because this is a life safety issues, the cost is well justified.

DCA also acknowledges in the rule proposal that federal law does not require the proposed revisions to the State Fire Safety Code.

There are a number of genuine and valid factors that were not considered by DCA prior to proposing the rule change to N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.17(b). For instance, there is no indication that DCA conducted an economic analysis of this rule proposal on high-rise residential buildings constructed prior to 1987 (the Code was amended in 1987 to require the installation of fire suppression systems in high-rise apartment buildings constructed thereafter see 19 N.J.R.1024(a) & 10 N.J.R.1720 (b)) beyond the blanket statement that the costs "may be significant." Further, there does not appear to be any indication that an analysis of the impact this rule proposal would have on owners of office buildings as compared to residential buildings. Nor is there any indication that DCA considered all of the possible social impacts resulting from this rule proposal. Finally, DCA's rule proposal does not indicate that it considered existing safety standards in its analysis before determining fire suppression systems would be necessary to address the safety risks associated with fires in high-rise residential buildings. The following report considers all of those factors, as well as some additional factors, in order to highlight for the Department the actual impact the proposed amendment to N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.17(b) would have on high-rise apartment complexes.

II. Analysis of Existing Fire Safety Code

In order to determine whether the installation of fire suppression systems is necessary to address the public safety risk associated with fires in high-rise residential buildings, an analysis of existing fire safety codes is required. Indeed, existing structures must be in compliance with state and local fire safety regulations (26 N.J.R. 4258(a) and 27 N.J.R. 878(b)). The following fire safety codes contained in the Fire Safety Code are intended to address the public safety risks associated with fires in high-rise residential buildings:

- Existing Fire Sprinkler Requirements: The Code requires that certain areas of Group R-2 structures are equipped with fire sprinkler systems; for instance, accessory spaces of Use Group A-3 which exceed 12,000 square feet and any windowless basement or windowless story below the seventh story (please note, however, that windowless basements not exceeding 3,000 square feet are exempt if they are equipped with a supervised automatic fire alarm system). (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.7 (f) & (h)).
- Wet Standpipe Requirements: The Code requires the installation of wet standpipe systems in those structures where the building is used for human occupancy more than six stories above grade. (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.8).
- Automatic Fire Alarm Systems: The Code requires the installation of automatic fire alarm systems in all interior common spaces, and imposes certain requirements on the type of fire alarm system in apartment buildings of six stories or more. Further, the Code includes additional requirements regarding the location of fire alarm system (so that they are heard above all other sounds). Residential units must install single-station smoke detectors. (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4-9).
- Manual Fire Alarm Systems: The Code imposes an additional requirements on buildings three or more stories in height with an occupancy of 25 or more. In those buildings, manual fire alarm systems are required. (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.10).
- Means of Egress Requirements: The Code thoroughly addresses means of egress and imposes certain safety conditions based upon the occupancy rates of the structure; the existence of fire suppression systems and exits in the basements of structures; the character of the structure, such as the height and type; and, the distance of travel to exits. The Code also imposes standards regarding the illumination of all means of egress in such buildings, which includes an additional requirement that sufficient backup power is in place to ensure all means of egress are properly illuminated in an emergency. The Code further requires that all means of egress doorways which open onto a passageway at grade or exit stair doors are equipped with self closing or automatic closing devices. The Code further regulates dwelling unit corridor doors (shall be at least 1 3/8 inch solid core wood with approved closers). (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4-11).
- Sealing of Transoms and other openings: All transoms in R-2 apartment buildings shall be either glazed with ¼ inch wire glass set in metal frames and permanently secured in the closed position or sealed with materials consistent with the corridor construction. Any other sash, grill or opening in a corridor, and any window in a corridor not opening to the outside air, shall be sealed with materials consistent with the corridor construction. (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.11 (o))
- Standards for Interior Finishes: Must comply with Code's flame spread ratings in order to best prevent spreading of fire. (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.12)

- Stairway Standards: All interior stairways and other vertical openings shall be enclosed with approved assemblies having various fire resistive ratings and approved opening protection. Stairways connecting six or more stories shall have a fire resistive rating of not less than two hours. (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.13).
- Fire Safety Information: Information signs shall be provided at each floor landing in all interior stairways more than three stories in height designating that floor level above the floor of discharge. Additional signs shall be provided at all elevator lobby call stations on all floors which indicate to use stairways in case of fire and not to use elevators. (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.14).
- Smoke Barrier Requirements: In buildings without automatic fire suppression systems, all elevator landings on every floor above the main lobby floor are required to install smoke barrier systems. (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.15).
- Air & Exhaust System Standards: Each re-circulating air or exhaust system which serves more than one floor shall be equipped with approved smoke and heat detection devices in accordance with the UCC. The devices shall stop the fan(s) automatically and shall be the manual reset type. Automatic shut down is not required when the system is part of an approved smoke removal or control system. (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.17 (d)).
- Elevator Requirements: All elevators shall be equipped with emergency control devices and automatic recall systems. (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.17 (e)).
- Inspection Authority: Fire and building code officials are required to inspect buildings located within their jurisdiction to ensure compliance with the code. (N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.4).

In addition to all of the aforementioned safety code requirements, high-rise residential buildings are constructed in such a way to avoid the spread of fires (constructed mostly of concrete, steel and other masonry material) so to contain fires within the perimeter of the dwelling unit and between floors. Thus, the risk associated with fires in these buildings is more than adequately addressed by existing safety code requirements and related construction code requirements. Generally, fires are contained in their area of origin in high-rise buildings. Existing code standards also ensure early warning/detection of fires in high-rise buildings, thereby allowing occupants to evacuate safely during a fire.

Since DCA has provided no evidence that the added requirement of a fire suppression system in all existing high-rise residential buildings will enhance existing safety standards in place intended to protect occupants of high-rise apartment complexes during a fire, or even firefighters who are involved in fighting those fires, there is no need from a fire-safety standpoint to adopt the proposed rule and require the installation of fire suppression systems in residential high-rise structures.

III. State-wide Statistics Regarding Fire-Related Deaths and Injuries

While the DCA proposal indicates a need to address the risk of injury to occupants of high-rise buildings and firefighters who must fight those fires, it lacks any analysis of available statistics regarding deaths and injuries in the State resulting from fires. A review of available studies of fire incidents reveal that there is no public safety threat that justifies the immediate adoption of the rule proposal to amend N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.17 to require the installation of fire suppression systems in existing high rise buildings.

For instance, between 2004 and 2006, the National Fire Incident Reporting System (“NFIRS”) prepared a study summarizing the State’s experience with fire during those years. As a result, it became apparent that during that three-year span:

- o Only four people died as a result of a fire in a high-rise residential buildings (one of those deaths occurred in a building that contained a fire-sprinkler system); and
- o 106 people died from injuries that occurred in single-family homes, accounting for approximately 73% of the total for all deaths occurring in residential dwellings in the State.

The NFIRS statistics make clear that people living in single-family homes are more at risk for death or serious injury resulting from a fire than those living in high-rise residential apartment buildings. Yet, nowhere in DCA’s rule proposal does the Department propose how it intends to address that risk, nor does it explain why it is requiring the installation of sprinkler systems in high-rise apartment complexes as opposed to single-family residential homes. In light of these statistics, a more thorough analysis is required.

The NFIRS studies reveal the following regarding fire-related injuries in residential structures in New Jersey in 2004, 2005 and 2006:

**Total Serious Injuries (including deaths)
Resulting From New Jersey Residential Fires**

	2004	2005	2006
Single-Family	257	301	298
Low-Rise [1-2 stories]	35	27	38
Mid-Rise [3-6 stories]	21	52	44
High-Rise [7+ stories]	17	12	12
Multi-Family [type unreported]	78	82	20
Total [all residential]	413	474	412

Residential Fire Deaths in New Jersey

	2004	2005	2006
Single-Family	32	34	40
Low-Rise [1-2 stories]	3	4	2
Mid-Rise [3-6 stories]	1	4	5
High-Rise [7+ stories]	1	2	1
Multi-Family [type unreported]	10	6	0
Total [all residential]	47	50	48

Source: NFIRS data provided by New Jersey Division of Fire Safety. Data provided 9/27/2007.

Based on the data prepared by NFIRS, the following is undisputed that there were only 41 reported serious injuries that occurred in connection with a fire in a high-rise residential building, four of which resulted in a death. In particular, the following facts are not in dispute:

- Only 3% of serious injuries that occurred in New Jersey between 2004 and 2005 in a residential setting occurred in connection with a fire in high-rise residential buildings.
- 12 of the 41 serious injuries occurred in high-rise buildings with fire sprinklers
- 28 of the 41 injuries occurred in high-rise buildings without fire sprinklers.
- The four deaths in high-rise residential buildings in New Jersey over a three year span of time constituted only 2.7% of the total of fire-related deaths in New Jersey - out of those four unfortunate deaths, one of them as a result of a fire in a high-rise building that was equipped with a fire sprinkler system.
- 106 people in single-family homes died between 2004 and 2006, accounting for 73% of the total deaths caused by fire in New Jersey.

The conclusion from all available data is clear: occupants in single-family homes are at a greater risk of injury than those in high-rise buildings in the case of a fire. However, the rule proposal does not propose any measures to address this known risk. Indeed, the following chart emphasizes the risk of serious injury resulting from a fire is greater in nearly every other residential setting than in a high-rise building.

Casualties	w/ Sprinklers	w/o Sprinklers	Undetermined	Total
Single Family	1	728	127	856
Multi Family Low-Rise	1	98	1	100
Multi Family Mid-Rise	7	103	7	117
Multi Family High-Rise	12	28	1	41
Multi Family Undetermined	13	88	79	79
Total All Residential	34	1045	215	1294

Source: NFIRS data provided by New Jersey Division of Fire Safety. Data provided 9/27/2007.

As to the risk posed to firefighters, the Division of Fire Safety investigated 10 fire incidents that occurred in the State between 2002 and 2007, which resulted in a death or serious injury to a firefighter. The conclusions included report prepared as a result of that investigation (as required by N.J.S.A. 52:27D-25d) note the following:

- Nine of the ten fires reported occurred in single-family home. The other incident occurred in a 3-story apartment structure.
- A total of 20 firefighters were seriously injured, 7 of which died as a result of their injuries.
- **None of those deaths or injuries occurred in connection with fighting a fire in a high-rise apartment building.**

The statistics clearly demonstrate that occupants of single-family homes are more at risk for injury in the case of fire than those in high-rise residential structures. It appears that existing fire code standards, which are more rigid in the case of high-rise structures than all other residential structures, addresses the risk associated with fires in high-rise residential structures. Therefore, there does not appear to be any compelling reason for DCA to adopt the proposed rule, which will be applicable to existing high-rise buildings only, especially where the statistics prove that the risk of death or serious injury in the case of fire is more serious in the case of single-family residential structures.

IV. Implementation Costs

While DCA notes in its rule proposal that the cost associated with installing automatic fire suppression systems within existing high-rise buildings will be “significant” and “would have an economic impact on some existing buildings in the State,” there is no indication that DCA conducted a thorough analysis of the costs. Instead, DCA indicates that “because this is a life safety issue, the cost is well justified.” Furthermore, it is apparent through information given to the NJAA, and later made public to DCA’s Codes Advisory Council, that the Department relied upon a cursory, and incomplete cost estimate produced by the very groups who stand to gain directly from the passage of this requirement - a consortium of the sprinkler manufactures and sprinkler fitters (Local Union 696). In the absence of specific information regarding the implementation costs, NJAA retained CMX to provide an opinion as to what would be required to implement this proposal.

The retrofitting existing high-rise apartment buildings that do not contain automatic fire suppression systems would be a complex construction project. Walls will need to be demolished and rebuilt; specific equipment and material will need to be purchased; various contractors will need to be retained for each job; replacement and/or upgrades of existing fire safety apparatus will be required, including fire alarm control panels; coordination with local municipalities is required to ensure proper water supply and installation of necessary water pumps. The following costs would be included in every single construction job to ensure compliance with DCA’s recent rule proposal:

- General contractor and subcontractor costs;
- Material costs;
- Permitting and related fees;
- Temporary protection;
- Selective demolition of existing walls and structure;
- Cutting and patching of existing walls and structure;
- Construction and installation of soffits when needed;
- Plaster, drywall and masonry repair;
- Fire stopping;
- Final cleaning;
- Labor costs;
- Moving or relocation of tenants;
- Miscellaneous painting to damaged walls, floors and ceilings;
- Lead paint and asbestos removal;
- Professional fees;
- Unknown conditions.

The New Jersey Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board, an entity that would surely benefit from the adoption of the proposed rule, has prepared a preliminary cost estimate for the implementation of DCA’s rule proposal, dated June 26, 2007. The report identifies 624 high-rise buildings in the State

that lack complete sprinkler protection, of which 48.1% are residential high-rise buildings (a total of 300 buildings at 51,701,410 square feet). The report indicates that the cost to retrofit all existing high rise buildings in the State of New Jersey would range between **\$447,261,094 and \$546,652,448** (the cost to retrofit residential buildings in the State, the cost is estimated by the Board to be **\$327,475,542** or \$6.33 per square foot). While these numbers appear shocking on their face, there are incomplete and their use to determine the actual implementation costs is limited. Indeed, the estimate prepared by the New Jersey Fire Sprinkler Board did not consider costs associated with asbestos removal, lead paint removal, concealing piping in walls, installation of soffits or any other related above-the-ceiling work. It also did not include painting costs nor take into account whether local municipalities will provide adequate water supply to allow the systems to work properly. Therefore, the \$6.33/sq. ft. figure is incomplete, but still staggering enough to show how further review of the rule proposal is necessary prior to considering its adoption.

When the other factors mentioned in the above-referenced list are included in the cost estimate analysis, the cost to retrofit an existing residential building escalates to somewhere between \$25 and \$35 per square foot, for a total cost statewide of **\$1.32 billion to \$1.85 billion.**¹ This number is consistent with the actual cost of an automatic fire suppression system projects that have occurred in the region (approximately \$2.5 million per building). It is reasonable to presume that the construction costs will continue to escalate in the future. It is my conclusion that the cost per unit to install an automatic fire suppression system in high-rise buildings constructed prior to 1987 will be approximately \$25,000 per unit, which, if amortized between five and ten years, will result in a rent increase of between \$200 to \$400 per month.

DCA's proposal makes no mention of these specific cost estimates in its proposal. Nor does it identify the areas of the State that will be hardest hit by this rule proposal. In fact, most high-rise apartment complexes are located within the cities of this State, a majority of which are located within Bergen, Essex and Hudson Counties (see NJAA Housing Impact Statement, attached hereto). Research shows that the median annual income among those who rent in New Jersey is \$37,662, and that more than 30% of their total income is dedicated toward rental payments. However, upon

¹ In addition to the costs noted above there are ongoing costs not included, such as maintenance costs, clean up costs after an accidental sprinkler head discharge and annual testing and certifications costs.

implementation of the proposed rule, the amount income the average renter in New Jersey will dedicate to rent will increase to burdensome and unaffordable levels approaching 50% of an average renter's total income.

Also absent from DCA's rule proposal is any consideration as to how this will impact buildings subject to rent control. Nor is there a discussion of the potential impact on subsidized affordable high-rise residential buildings in this State, despite the fact that the production, maintenance, and oversight of subsidized (or assisted) housing is a key mission of the DCA. There should have been a thorough analysis of the costs that would be imposed on low-income residents and those who finance low-income housing, such as the State Home Mortgage Finance Authority and the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, to determine whether subsidization of this retrofit provision is necessary. It cannot be avoided that implementation of this rule decrease the amount of affordable units available to citizens in this State in need of affordable housing, which will directly impact the Governor's goal of creating 100,000 new units of affordable housing within the next decade. Indeed, if funding agencies are unable to increase their subsidies to cover the increases in cost, the contract and deed restrictions for many of these agencies are nullified, thereby causing a loss in affordable housing.

Furthermore, this rule proposal does not take into account the impact (and any related costs) the installation of automatic sprinkler systems would have on the older public water systems and related utility infrastructure. Such costs are incalculable at this point.

It is clear that the substantial economic impact associated with implementing this proposal, as well as the related social costs, far outweigh the fire safety risks with these buildings. Thus, DCA should withdraw its proposal to amend N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.17 to require the installation of automatic fire suppression systems.

V. **Automatic Fire Suppression Systems Are Not Fully Reliable**

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and its members have produced various reports analyzing the operational reliability of automatic fire sprinklers over the years. After considering the probability that the system and/or the system's components will operate as intended when needed, NFPA has concluded that automatic fire suppression systems are reliable only 87% to 89% of the time.² The reports also note that automatic sprinkler systems are designed to control fires, not necessarily to extinguish fires. Indeed, only 20% of fires in apartment buildings were actually extinguished by an automatic sprinkler system between 1988 and 1998. The studies also reveal that automatic sprinkler systems are considered by building insurance underwriters as a means to limit property damage claims rather than address occupant safety.

Additionally, residential settings are not perfectly amenable to sprinklers. The placement of furniture (e.g. coat racks, clothing, curtains) may obstruct the spray of the sprinkler head limiting its effectiveness. Since the operational reliability of fire sprinkler systems in a residential setting is not absolute, and are instead primarily intended to assist in a reduction of property loss caused by a fire in a high-rise apartment building, there is no evidence to suggest that the installation of automatic sprinkler systems in existing high-rise apartment complexes is absolutely necessary to address any compelling risk or threat associated with fires in high-rise residential structures. Other means of protection, such as early warning and compliance with existing safety codes, provide more protection for the occupants of a high-rise apartment complex.

² Based on its ten-year study of 50,000 fires in apartment buildings between 1989 to 1999, NFPA concluded that the system worked 87.6% of the time. It considered 8770 fires in 1999, and found the systems to work 89.2% of the time.

VI. Comparison of Other Governmental Action in this Area

The rule proposal indicates that there have been “recent fire losses in other states” that justifies the adoption of a rule to require all existing high-rise buildings in the State of New Jersey to be retrofitted with fire suppression systems. However, DCA does not mention what States it was referring to. And, DCA does not also indicate whether it considered how other governmental entities have addressed this issue.

The Cities of Philadelphia, New York and Chicago have each decided against mandating the installation of sprinkler systems in existing high-rise apartment complexes located within their jurisdiction. Instead, the governing bodies of Philadelphia, New York and Chicago favor compliance with fire safety code requirements that address the risk associated with fires in high-rises rather than impose substantial economic and social costs on their communities. Each of those cities provide an accurate means of comparison in light of their close proximity to New Jersey (Philadelphia and New York) and because many of the buildings located in those cities are similar to the high-rise apartment complexes located in the cities of New Jersey.

A. City of Philadelphia

The City of Philadelphia has over the past few years reviewed and modified their Fire Code (Subcode “F” - Title 4 of The Philadelphia Code) to include requirements for existing high-rise residential buildings.³ When deciding whether the installation of fire sprinklers in high-rise buildings was necessary, Philadelphia exempted existing high-rise Group R-2 occupancies that have been occupied without change in use since December 1991 so long as the following fire safety requirements are met (similar to those required in New Jersey):

- Fire sprinklers are required in basements of high-rise apartment buildings if the basement openings and storage areas for trash and combustibles require additional protection (F-930.6.5);
- Class 1 standpipes are to be installed in all buildings (F-905.1);
- Portable fire extinguishers are to be installed under certain conditions (F-906.2);
- Manual fire alarm system and automatic fire detection system requirements for common areas, corridors and basements (F-907);
- Single station smoke alarm requirements for each dwelling unit (F-907.3.2);

³ The 2007 Philadelphia Fire Code incorporates the 2006 International Fire Code with amendments and is a joint product of both the Philadelphia Fire Department and the Philadelphia Department of Licenses and Inspections.

- Strict standards for fire alarm system (F-907);
- Fire Department connections shall be visible to approaching fire apparatus or indicated with signage as specified (F-912.2.2);
- Fire protection information and related signage to be posted (F-912.4);
- Standards for elevators (i.e., elevator recall system is required and one elevator must be made available to firefighters) (F-607);
- Implementation of an emergency planning and preparedness plan (Chapter 4);
- Annual fire safety drills (F-405);
- Regular testing of the fire safety systems (F-915);
- Instillation of smoke barriers (Chapter 7); and
- Strict means of egress requirements are provided (Chapter 10).

Thus, Philadelphia has opted in favor of strict compliance with existing fire safety codes rather than mandating retrofitting of all high-rise apartment complexes located within its city.

B. New York City

Similarly, New York City has decided against requiring high-rise residential buildings to be retrofitted with automatic sprinkler systems. Instead, New York's Building Code (Title 27 of the Administrative Code of New York City, updated through October 2007) indicates that all high-rise office buildings are to install fire sprinkler systems by 2019, but existing residential high-rise buildings are exempt from this requirement with the exception of basements, cellars and other locations below grade. It is not until an owner of an existing highrise residential building decides to conduct major construction project that installation of a fire sprinkler system may be required. For instance, if four or more dwelling units of an existing residential building are altered, and the alterations take place on an entire floor, or the value of the alterations within any twelve month period exceed fifty percent of the building value, New York City's Building Code requires the installation of automatic fire sprinkler systems. Cf. N.J.A.C. 5:23-6.1. This rule requirement makes a lot of sense because it is at this time - when an existing high rise building is undergoing construction - that the costs associated with retrofitting the building is more cost efficient. And, the City of New York has required additional safety upgrades in high-rise residential buildings, such as standpipes and fire alarm systems. The City also imposes strict means of egress requirements, which are similar to those of New Jersey.

C. City of Chicago

The City of Chicago took an alternate approach to provide a reasonable balance between safety and the economic and social costs of mandating the installation of automatic fire suppression systems in existing non-sprinklered high-rise buildings. To address the risk associated with fires in existing high-rise apartment buildings, in December 2004, Chicago instituted an ordinance pursuant to Section 13:196-205 of the City's Building Code, to provide as follows:

- o Evacuation plans for all high-rise buildings, electronically filed with the City's 911 center;
- o Prohibiting locked stairway doors against re-entry, except for automatic and manual unlocking systems, in all buildings with stairways serving four or more stories;
- o Voice communication systems for occupant notification and fire department communication in most high-rise buildings;
- o Automatic sprinkler protection for commercial high-rise buildings, other than "landmark" buildings;
- o Life Safety Evaluations (LSE) to verify a minimum level of fire safety in high-rise buildings without sprinkler systems⁴;
- o Modification of materials and installation criteria to allow more economical installations and encourage fire protection improvements; and,
- o Requirement for a minimum one-hour fire resistive stairway enclosure in residential buildings.

Like Philadelphia and New York City, Chicago has decided against mandating the retrofitting of all existing high-rise apartment buildings within its jurisdiction, and instead requires strict compliance with building code and related fire safety code to address the risk of death and injury associated with fires in high-rise apartment complexes. The safety codes emphasize the importance of containment, early warning and safe evacuation. The LSE is an additional requirement, to be prepared by a licensed professional, to identify whether any remedial action is required to bring the building into conformance with City's fire safety codes and regulations. If the building cannot be brought into compliance through alterations, then an automatic fire suppression system must be added. Chicago also provides tax incentives to encourage the implementation of additional fire safety precautions that are taken in existing high rise apartment buildings. The City of Chicago model

⁴ Chicago mandates a LSE for both residential (non-transient) and office/commercial (transient) buildings, and have devised specific LSE requirements based upon type of occupancy. In general, the LSE measures the ability to contain a fire within its place of origin, means of egress, notification and overall fire safety of a building.

therefore provides an alternative means of compliance to encourage improvements in existing residential high-rise building occupants without mandating the installation of costly automatic fire suppression systems.

VII. Conclusion

After a review of the rule proposal and available data regarding fire suppression systems, it is not in the public interest from a fire safety standpoint to adopt the proposed amendment to N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.17 and require all existing apartment buildings within the State of New Jersey without fire sprinkler systems to be retrofitted with such systems. Thus, DCA should withdraw the portion of the rule proposal to amend N.J.A.C. 5:70-4.17.

A. Economic Impact: DCA's rule proposal does not include an economic analysis of the costs associated with implementing this rule regulation. However, it is uncontested that the construction costs associated with implementing this regulation are staggering. To implement this regulation, it will cost between **\$1.32 billion to \$1.85 billion** statewide. This is not a cost that cannot be borne by renters in this State without imposing significant hardship to them, and is of such significance that it cannot be absorbed by housing providers along. Thus, tenant rents are likely to increase between \$200 to \$400 per month. Since the annual income of an average renter in this State is only \$31,000, an increase of up to \$4800 per year in renters' budgets would be unduly burdensome. It is also clear that municipalities will be affected by this regulation, especially if their public utility infrastructure is unable to deal with this burden associated with implementing this rule proposal, but there is no mention of that impact in DCA's rule proposal. And, the rule proposal fails to take into account the impact this will have on affordable housing apartment complexes. While the State and DCA have passed a number of mandates to improve availability and access to safe, decent and affordable housing in this State to maximize social and economic opportunity for its citizens, the social and economic cost associated with implementing the proposed rule will simply undermine all of those measures. DCA should therefore exercise caution before proposing to pass this cost to those who can least afford it in this State.

B. Social Impact: DCA does not indicate whether it fully considered the social impact associated with implementing this regulation. For instance, DCA did not take into account costs associated with relocating residents during the construction phase of this project. Nor did DCA take

into account the demographics of those likely to be impacted during the implementation phase. Most of the high-rise apartment buildings in this State that would need to be retrofitted to come into compliance with this rule are located in the various cities of this State. Most renters in our cities already dedicate a third of their income toward rent; upon the adoption and implementation of this rule, they would then be required to dedicate half of their income toward their rental payments.

C. Safety Risks in High-Rise Apartment Buildings: DCA failed to consider existing safety codes and regulations that are in place to address the risk associated with fires in high-rise apartment buildings. Additionally, DCA failed to take into account studies that show deaths and injuries are more likely to occur in single-family homes (67%) rather than high-rise apartment buildings (3%). It appears, therefore, that existing fire safety code requirements address the risk associated with high-rise residential buildings. There is no evidence to suggest that fire suppression systems would result in a decrease in fire-related deaths and injuries in high-rise residential buildings. Instead, available data suggests that existing fire safety codes provide equivalent degree of protection to occupants of high-rise residential buildings.

D. Summary: In light of the astronomical economic and burdensome social costs associated with requiring existing high-rise apartment buildings to install fire suppression systems, and the small risk of fire-related deaths and injuries in such buildings, DCA should decide against adopting the proposed rule and instead ensure compliance of existing safety standards by high-rise residential building owners.

RESUME OF STEPHEN F. FINKLEMAN, P.E.



STEPHEN F. FINKELMAN, P.E.

Education

M.B.A. - (coursework) - Information Sciences, Temple University, 1979

B.S. - Mechanical Engineering, Temple University, 1974

A.S. - Engineering Technology, Temple University, 1968

Professional Registrations

P.E. - PA (#PE024995E), NJ (#24GE03005800), NY (#064769), DE (#5257), WV (#009566), MD (#13878), NV (#007561), IL (#62 046030), VT (#018-0005665), MN (#20812), ID (#5248), DC (#749009133), MA (#35620), MO (#024126), CA (#29162), SC (#16289), UT (#94-270569-2202)

Professional Affiliations

National Society of Professional Engineers, Member

Pennsylvania Society of Professional Engineers, Member

American Society of Heating, Refrigeration & Air Conditioning Engineers, Member

American Society of Plumbing Engineers, Member

National Fire Protection Association, Member

American Arbitration Association, Member/Construction Industry Arbitration Panel

Summary of Experience

Mr. Finkelman, a Department Manager in the firm's MEP Department, has 40 years of experience in the engineering and construction field. He has held positions as a consultant, forensic engineer, fire protection engineer, manager of a fortune 100 corporation's corporate design and engineering department, financial manager and executive administration officer of a consulting engineering and construction firm, vice president of a consulting mechanical and electrical engineering firm, and project manager for engineering design for an agency of the federal government. He has administered, designed and engineered projects in the commercial, health care, public, industrial, educational, hotel, casino, residential, energy, environmental and pharmaceutical fields. He serves as a construction industry arbitration panel member for the American Arbitration Association, helping to adjudicate construction project claims. He has been instrumental in the design, engineering and testing of alternate energy conservation systems for demonstration and practical applications, such as ground source geothermal systems, thermal ice storage systems, solar domestic hot water systems and energy recovery systems and leads the Department's fire protection design and engineering. He is involved in mentoring young and engineers in HVAC, plumbing and fire protection design.

REFERENCES

Division of Fire Safety Proposed Amendments to N.J.A.C. 5:70, Uniform Fire Code.

N.J.A.C. 5:70 Uniform Fire Code, Chapter 4.

N.J.A.C. 5:23 Uniform Construction Code

Reliability of Automatic Sprinkler Systems by William E. Koffel, P.E., 2005.

New Jersey Fire Division of Safety, Firefighter Fatality and Serious Injury Reports

NFIRS Fire Deaths and Casualty Data for New Jersey, 204, 2005 and 2006.

New Jersey Division of Fire Safety, Fires in New Jersey 2001 to 2003.

New Jersey Division of Fire Safety, Fires in New Jersey 2004 and 2005.

USFA/NFDC Fires in the United States 1995-2004.

NJFSAB High-Rise Building Fire Sprinkler Protection Cost/Impact Report, June 26,
2007.

NJAA Housing Impact of Sprinkler Regulations (copy attached hereto)

The City of Philadelphia 2007 Fire Code

Building Code of the City of New York

City of Chicago, Department of Buildings, Rules and Regulations for the inspection of
Buildings and Preparation of Life Safety Evaluation Reports

MMHA_UNFAV_SB970.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Graziano

Position: UNF



Committee: Education, Energy, and Environment

Bill: Senate Bill 970- Fire Protection and Prevention - Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms - Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Date: March 16, 2023

Position: Unfavorable

This testimony is offered on behalf of the Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA). MMHA is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose membership consists of owners and managers of more than 207,246 rental housing homes in more than 937 apartment communities. Our members house over 667,000 residents of the State of Maryland throughout the entire State of Maryland. MMHA membership also includes more than 216 associate members that supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry. More information is available at <https://www.mmhaonline.org/>

Senate Bill 970 (SB 970) requires housing providers to install automatic smoke alarms and sprinklers systems in all high-rise buildings by a specified date. MMHA has tremendous respect for the intent of the bill, but statistics do not support this sweeping and costly mandate.

The National Fire Protection Association has consistently found that fires, fire related deaths, and fire related injuries are significantly higher in non-high-rise apartment or multifamily buildings. In fact, between 2009 and 2013, fires in non-high-rise buildings accounted for 92% of total fire related deaths and 91% of injuries related injuries.¹ Additionally, most fires in high-rise buildings begin between the 1st and 6th floors and are two to four times less likely to spread beyond the floor of origin than their non- high- rise counterparts. This is largely because high-rise residential buildings are constructed with concrete, steel, and other masonry materials to avoid the spread of fires and contain them to the perimeter of the dwelling unit and between floors. The risk associated with fires in these buildings is more than adequately addressed by existing safety and construction code requirements. Thus, there is no evidence to support that installation of automatic smoke alarms or sprinkler systems will make high- rise building appreciably safer.

Moreover, the installation of additional fire safety systems is a complex and costly project, in which the cost is ultimately absorbed by the resident. Such installations may include: general contractor and subcontractor costs, material costs, permitting and related fees, temporary protection, selective demolition of existing walls and structure, cutting and patching of existing

¹ <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/News-and-Research/Fire-statistics-and-reports/Building-and-life-safety/oshighrise.pdf>

walls and structure, construction and installation of soffits when needed, plaster, drywall and masonry repair, fire stopping, final cleaning, labor costs, moving or relocation of tenants, miscellaneous painting to damaged walls, floors and ceilings, lead paint and asbestos removal, professional fees, and other unknown conditions.² Estimates for these construction projects range from \$20,000 to \$50,000 per unit, and result in an increase of \$200 to \$400 per month in additional rent for the resident.

In most cases, these upgrades will not be required for new housing stock. For instance, Md. Code Ann. Public Safety 9-403 has required all buildings since 1974 to be constructed with automatic sprinkler systems. Older housing stock has long been an affordable housing option for renters, who would likely be destabilized if required to absorb the cost of comprehensive infrastructure upgrades. Based on available data, it is difficult to justify the potential displacement of vulnerable populations given the menial safety benefits.

For the foregoing reasons, MMHA requests an unfavorable report on SB 970.

² Analysis of Proposed Amendment to State Fire Prevention Code to Mandate the Installation of Fire Suppression Systems in High Rise Residential Buildings, CMX Consulting, Stephen F. Finkleman P.E, 2007