

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.