

SB 0970 - SUPPORT  
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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<sup>th</sup>, 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 18<sup>th</sup>, 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

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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*