

SB0970- SUPPORT
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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.