

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 15<sup>th</sup>, 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.