



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Atif Chaudhry, Acting Secretary

BILL: House Bill 769 Public Safety – Fire Dampers, Smoke Dampers, Combination Fire Smoke Dampers, and Smoke Control Systems

COMMITTEE: House Environment and Transportation

DATE: February 28, 2023

POSITION: Letter of Information

Upon review of House Bill 769 Public Safety – Fire Dampers, Smoke Dampers, Combination Fire Smoke Dampers, and Smoke Control Systems, the Maryland Department of General Services (DGS), provides these comments for your consideration.

DGS owns fifty-two (52) facilities and supports State-owned facilities of various Agencies (1,354 facilities) for a total of approximately twenty-six (26) million gross square feet and a total of 1,406 facilities. DGS assumes that work required under this bill to address bringing State-owned buildings into compliance would come through DGS as the agencies DGS supports do not have delegated authority to address this need.

This bill would require each fire damper, smoker damper, combination fire smoke damper, or smoke control system to be installed in accordance with accepted engineering practices that meet National Fire Protection Association standards and be approved by the state fire marshal. Fire dampers are passive fire protection products used in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning ducts to prevent the spread of fire inside the ductwork through fire-resistance-rated walls and floors. The owner of a building with fire dampers is required to have them inspected by October 1, 2024, if installed before then. If the fire dampers are installed on or after October 1, 2023, they must be inspected within 12 months. **Following the initial inspection a recurring inspection must occur at least every 6 years for a hospital, and every 4 years for all other types of building.** If the equipment fails to pass inspection it must be replaced or remedied to comply with the bill's requirements.

Initially, DGS would be required to inspect every DGS-owned or operated building. This inspection would equal **26 million square feet** to identify the location of fire dampers in each facility. This **initial inspection, remediation and/or repairs as identified could cost over \$100 million.** Ongoing annual costs to conduct inspections and repairs every four (4) years for buildings and every six (6) years for hospitals are estimated at approximately \$20 million annually.

For additional information, contact Ellen Robertson at 410-260-2908.