



Speaker Pro Tem Stein  
301 Lowe House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 1, 2024

**Re: HB 1179 – Housing and Community Development – Pets in Housing Developments**

Dear Speaker Pro Tem Stein and House Environment & Transportation Committee Members,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the recent **HB 1179 – Housing and Community Development – Pets in Housing Developments**. As an affordable housing developer, I always advocate for safe and comfortable living environments and believe it is important to address the potential negative impacts of this policy change.

While I understand that many individuals view their pets as important companions and family members, allowing pets in apartments can pose significant challenges and risks for property owners, tenants and the overall community. I would like to outline a few key points for your consideration:

1. **Noise and Disruption:** Dogs, especially when left alone for extended periods, can create excessive noise that can disturb neighboring residents. This can lead to conflicts and an overall decrease in the quality of living for everyone in the building. Additionally, some individuals may have allergies or phobias related to dogs or other pets, and their well-being should also be taken into account.
2. **Safety and Hygiene:** Dogs, regardless of their size or temperament, can present safety risks in shared spaces such as hallways, elevators, and common areas. This can be particularly concerning for individuals who have a fear of dogs or who may have limited mobility and struggle to navigate around them. There is also the risk of dog waste not being properly disposed of, which can lead to hygiene and sanitation issues.
3. **Property Damage:** Dogs, especially when not properly trained or supervised, can cause damage to the property, such as scratching doors, chewing on furniture, or soiling carpets. This can result in additional costs for property owners.

4. Liability and Insurance: Allowing pets in apartments can also raise liability and insurance concerns for both tenants and property owners. This may hinder our ability to get insurance on our properties, as insurance carriers require us to submit our pet policies for review and approval prior to them providing insurance coverage. In the event of an incident or injury caused by a pet, determining responsibility and potential legal implications can be complex and costly. HB 1179, specifically, does not exempt an Owner or agent from any liability related to damage caused by the pet of a resident.

Furthermore, HB 1179 would require Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties to accept pets, regardless of number, breed, or size, and prohibit property owners from charging a pet fee for said pets. Not only does this bill unfairly target LIHTC properties, but it would place further liability and financial burden on these already highly regulated and financially strained properties. The nominal pet fee that is charged to the tenant helps to offset some of the increased operating costs. LIHTC properties can only charge the maximum rents allowed by the IRS, so they cannot simply increase rents to cover these expenses.

Considering these potential challenges and risks, I respectfully urge you to reconsider the proposal to allow pets in apartments. Instead, I encourage the exploration of alternative solutions that would accommodate the needs of pet owners while ensuring the safety, comfort, and well-being of all residents. Reasonable accommodations are often made for service animals and no fees are charged in these cases. I think you will find that the owners of LIHTC projects have responsible pet policies in place. We cannot bear the additional expenses and liability associated with the passage of this bill and therefore request an unfavorable report.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and the time you have taken to consider the concerns raised. As a valued leader in our community, your thoughtful consideration and decision-making on this issue will have a significant impact on the overall living conditions and harmony within our apartments.

Thank you for your dedication to serving our community, and I look forward to your wise decision regarding this matter.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian Lopez, President  
Osprey Property Company