

February 9, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman  
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee  
Room 251, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 502 - Public Safety - Fire Dampers, Smoke Dampers, Combination Fire Smoke Dampers, and Smoke Control Systems - UNFAVORABLE

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in my capacity as both the Legislative Chairman of the Building Owners and Managers Association of Greater Baltimore (BOMA), and as a member of its Board of Directors, to respectfully request an unfavorable report on House Bill 502.

BOMA, through its nearly 300 members, represents owners and managers of all types of commercial property, comprising 143 million square feet of office space in Baltimore and Central Maryland. Our members' facilities support over 19,000 jobs and contribute \$2.5 billion to the Maryland economy each year.

Initially, we note that House Bill 502 bears a close resemblance to House Bill 769/Senate Bill 614, which were introduced in the 2023 General Assembly Session and were not acted upon in either the Senate or House Committee.

Of particular interest, the fiscal note prepared for the 2023 legislation identified a significant increase in State expenditures – “potentially by more than \$100 million dollars in FY 2024.” The fiscal note goes on to project even more significant costs in future years, and makes the same projection for local governments as well. For private businesses that are also building owners, that same fiscal note describes the effect as “meaningful.”

BOMA has also been advised that certification of compliance under the provisions of House Bill 502 will almost certainly be a challenge. For example, there appears to be only a single Maryland company currently certified as a fire and smoke damper contractor. That raises the prospect of increased costs and slower compliance times for building owners.

Given the quite substantial projections of compliance costs in the fiscal note on last year's legislation, BOMA respectfully requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 502. We would be happy to work with the Committee on this issue in the future to determine the most effective ways to identify the problem and address it appropriately.

Sincerely,



Kevin J. Bauer