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Chairman Korman and Committee Members
Environment and Transportation Committee
The Lowe House Office Building
6 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD. 21401

February 9, 2024

HB-502 Public Safety- Fire Dampers, Smoke Dampers, Combination Fire Smoke Dampers and Smoke Control Systems

I ask for a favorable vote on HB-502

Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony on HB-502. My name is Dale Sheppard, and I am a Vice President with the Bowers Group in Beltsville, Maryland. I have worked in the mechanical contracting industry for the last 42 years. We at Bowers take great care and responsibility in our work as it relates to fire life safety.

I have seen a multitude of instances where Fire Dampers, Smoke Fire Dampers and Smoke control systems were not properly installed or don't operate correctly. These deficiencies occur for many different reasons, but regular periodic inspections and maintenance of these items would go a long way in addressing these problems. There is a lack of compliance with various codes/standards, and the following manufacturer's recommendations regarding these devices.

A Fire Damper reliability study was done in 2021 by Dr. James Milke Ph.D., P.E. Professor and Chair of the Department of Fire Protection Engineering School at the University of Maryland. The study concluded that 67.7% of all buildings had issues (repair, replacement or need of access) with the FLS dampers. Because there's such a prevalent problem with fire dampers and smoke fire dampers not working as designed there is a real need for the individual that not only install but that will test fire dampers, smoke fire dampers and smoke-controlled systems to maintain a certification under ANSI (American National Standards Institute) in doing this work. A positive step to correct the prevalent problem is to ensure that the individuals doing the inspections are certified in the work they are performing, and all fire dampers, smoke fire dampers and smoke-controlled systems be checked every four years.

Currently, sprinkler systems, Fire alarm systems, and fire extinguishers are tested periodically to guarantee that they work properly. Unfortunately, other components such as fire dampers, smoke dampers and smoke control systems are not clearly subject to inspection and testing requirements.

By passing HB-502 it would ensure that in an event of a fire all occupants and fire fighters that were in or entering the building at the time of a fire would be in less harm and less likely to perish in a building fire. Secondary and tertiary results of having ANSI certified technicians test the said dampers every four years may result in lower insurance costs and lower electrical costs. When an HVAC system operates with faulty dampers that are closed, partially closed or partial blocked the HVAC system fan uses more energy to overcome the unnecessary resistance in the duct system.

Once again, I ask you for a favorable vote on HB-502.

Respectfully,

Dale Sheppard
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