



Chair Marc Korman
and Members, Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 20, 2024

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

My name is Dan Reed and I serve as the Regional Policy Director for [Greater Greater Washington](#), a nonprofit that works to advance racial, economic, and environmental justice in land use, transportation, and housing throughout Greater Washington. **GGWash supports House Bill 823, the Melanie Nicholle Diaz Fire Safety Act**, which provides important protections to the residents of older high-rise buildings.

We are deeply grateful to Delegate Charkoudian for her ongoing commitment to this issue, as it's personal for me. I grew up in Arrive Silver Spring (formerly Georgian Towers), the Silver Spring apartment complex where last year a catastrophic fire displaced hundreds of residents and claimed the life of a young woman named Melanie Diaz. That fire was nothing new. We moved there in 1991 when I was three and stayed for seven years. Some of my most formative memories are of being trapped in our 14th floor apartment during fires; strangers helping my mother carry me down the stairs while evacuating; and waiting in the cold, dark night for the firefighters to say it was safe to return.


There are buildings like this all over Maryland, built before modern fire safety measures were required. This bill will protect the thousands of people who call them home. It would require property owners to install fire alarms and escape lighting in public areas; provide fire safety and evacuation instructions to tenants on a regular basis; identify funding sources for property owners to install fire sprinklers; and form a workgroup to identify best practices for retrofitting sprinklers in older high-rise buildings.

No one else should go through what Melanie Diaz's family experienced, and House Bill 823 can help ensure that. We urge the Environment and Transportation Committee to give this bill a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Dan Reed'.

Dan Reed
Regional Policy Director

The Washington, DC region is great  and it can be greater.