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Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SPONSOR TESTIMONY
Senate Bill 856
MARYLAND TENANT MOLD PROTECTION ACT

Chairman Smith and Committee Members

For the record, I am Senator Shaneka Henson from the 30th Legislative District of Anne Arundel County, MD. and I thank you for the opportunity to present this important Bill that has been a priority of mine for years.

We have all read or heard stories about apartments and homes subjected to levels of mold that reach a dangerous health level. And we have all heard about the challenges of being able to address these conditions particularly after they exist. So, what if we had a way to assess the various levels of mold, so that conditions were rectified early on – before getting to an extreme state requiring expensive remediation. Surely owners of apartments and houses would benefit. Because right now, we as a country, do not have any standardized method to make that determination. Even within the federal health system, such standards do not exist.

In 2024, the general assembly created a work group with representatives of state health agencies and public industry companies – all involved in mold remediation to research these underlying factors and identify ways to address them. Specifically, what are the actions needed to catch mold conditions in the early phases, and get it corrected before it reaches dangerous levels requiring remediation.

Senate Bill 856 proposes to implement the initial recommendations of the 2024 Workgroup on Mold Standards and Remediation and create best practices for:

- (i) Identifying and assessing levels of mold,
- (ii) preventing mold from developing to extreme levels within indoor environments; and
- (iii) actions targeted to remediating indoor mold conditions harmful to public health.

These recommendations are the product of scientific and research findings intended to address a long standing and neglected issue impacting tenants who are often the victims of these unhealthy living conditions.

In this bill, we are today primarily focusing on the educational and maintenance components – not the licensing and training aspect which is better left to industry experts.

Senate Bill 856 includes:

- (i) MDE establishing a statewide website with county links containing education for both tenants and landlords about mold, information about an assessment and notification process. It provides a process for educational information about preventing mold situations, taking advantage of existing and available materials from the US EPA.
- (ii) Requiring landlords to provide this information to tenants prior to moving into the unit; and to act within certain time periods after having received a notice from the tenant about the existence of mold conditions.
- (iii) Requiring State and County agencies to adopt a standardized assessment process intended to understand and assess mold conditions occurring before they get to a dangerous level and updating and reinforcing building codes as well as existing operations and maintenance practices.
- (iv) Requiring tenants to sign a statement acknowledging receiving information about mold prevention that they will follow.

If we can address this lack of a standardized assessment process, we have the tools to prevent conditions from turning into remediation issues, while protecting the health of families.

Joining me today to provide expert and supporting testimony are.

- Gabrielle Leach, Maryland Department of Health
- Aaron Greenberg representing the Maryland Multi-housing Association.
- Lisa Saro, Attorney, Community Legal Services
- Matthew Hill, Attorney, Public Justice Center

After hearing today's testimony about the ability to address this issue, I urge you to give a favorable report to this bill.