



Senate Bill 573

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Bill: Senate Bill 573 Baltimore City - Ordinance Enforcement - Amount of Fines and Penalties

Date: February 6th, 2025

Position: Unfavorable

The Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA) is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members house more than 538,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA's membership consists of owners and managers of more than 210,000 rental housing homes in over 958 apartment communities and more than 250 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

Senate Bill 573 increases the maximum amount that Baltimore City is authorized to establish for civil and criminal fines and penalties for violating certain ordinances, rules, or regulations from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

Consistent with our testimony from last session's House Bill 501 that increased charter counties' ability to fine from \$1,000 to \$5,000, MMHA believes that reasonable fines serve as a necessary deterrent to bad actors. However, an increase in civil and criminal fines and penalties from \$1,000 to \$10,000 (a 900% increase) is punitive. MMHA is concerned about the unintended consequences. Within our industry, this could lead to more evictions in Baltimore City. Housing providers will be more inclined to find a resident in breach of lease if their conduct results in a \$10,000 fine that the property owner must pay. Further, such fines may lead to increased litigation and legal challenges, as individuals and business entities contest the fairness of the fines. This will further strain resources within the overwhelmed Baltimore City legal system, and result in lengthy legal battles that further burden both the affected parties.

To mitigate these unintended consequences, the Committee should carefully consider the potential impacts of fines, ensure fairness and proportionality in application, and explore alternative approaches to address undesirable behaviors without resorting to unreasonable measures. For these reasons, we respectfully request an **unfavorable report** on Senate Bill 573.

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