

CHRIS WEST
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Judicial Proceedings Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 31, 2026
The Maryland State House Economic Matters Committee
The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 12 – Residential Rental Apartments – Air-Conditioning Requirement

Chair Valderrama and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

The premise of this bill is very simple ... that it gets really, really hot in Maryland in the summer and that living without air conditioning in such conditions can actually be dangerous. This bill presumes that a rented residence without air conditioning should be just as unacceptable as a rental without heat or water or indoor plumbing. Given the extreme summer heat in Maryland, our citizens who live in rentals should be provided with decent air conditioning.

This bill would require residential rental units in newly built large, multi-family apartment buildings to have air conditioning sufficient to cool the apartments down to at least 80 degrees. This would also extend to existing apartment buildings that undergo the complete replacement or substantial upgrading of their electrical systems or heating systems. In other words, if the landlord is going to spend a lot of money upgrading an existing building, the installation of air conditioning should be a part of the project.

Last year, an earlier version of this bill was introduced by Delegate Lehman in the House and passed that body overwhelmingly, but it was opposed by the various organizations representing landlords. Their opposition was not based upon the basic thrust of the bill but was based upon the fact that the bill required that Maryland adopt standards promulgated by a national organization. This year, that requirement has been deleted from the bill. Instead, the bill merely invokes the 80-degree requirement, something that is easily measurable with a standard thermometer.

Also, last year the City of Baltimore was concerned that the bill would apply to a number of very old, City-owned public housing structures with electrical systems not capable of accommodating building-wide air conditioning. Language in this year's bill has been added exempting buildings falling into that category.

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So, I believe that Senate Bill 12 has successfully obviated the objections that were encountered last year and that this bill will be acceptable all around. Let's all agree that in this day and age, our citizens, whatever their income class, should be able to live in relative comfort during those summer heat waves and not bake and sweat in intolerable heat.

I also should point out that this bill has no fiscal note.

This bill passed in the Senate with one amendment. The amendment stipulates that the law bill will only apply to residential units with 10 or more individual dwellings and will NOT apply to residential units located on property listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It also will supersede local laws that may be inconsistent with it.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of Senate Bill 12 and will be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.