

FROM: Julia Rawlins
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TO: Delegate Kriselda Valderrama
House Economic Matters Committee

DATE: March 11, 2026

RE: **Written Testimony in Support of HB1549**
Expanding Maryland's Lead Law to Protect Tenants Renting Single Rooms

Dear Chair Valderrama and Members of the Committee,

My name is Julia Rawlins, and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 1549, which would expand Maryland's lead law protections to include tenants renting single-room units.

I rented a single room in a house built in 1967, a time when lead-based paint was commonly used in residential construction. Because I rented only a room rather than a full apartment or dwelling unit, I later discovered that Maryland's lead law protections did not clearly apply to my situation in the same way they do for tenants renting entire units.

After moving in, concerns arose regarding whether the property had met the lead safety requirements associated with Maryland's Reduction of Lead Risk in Housing Program, administered by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). I later discovered that my lease contained **incorrect information stating that the property was not constructed before 1978 and therefore did not contain lead-based paint**, even though the home was in fact built in 1967.

This experience made it clear to me that tenants renting single rooms in older housing may not always receive the same disclosures, certifications, and protections that Maryland law provides to other renters. Without clarification in the law, tenants in rooming arrangements may unknowingly fall outside protections that were intended to safeguard residents from lead hazards.

Without this Bill, a growing number of Maryland renters living in single-room rental units may unknowingly be excluded from protections the legislature intended for all tenants in pre-1978 housing.

Single-room rentals are increasingly common across Maryland. Many working adults, students, and individuals facing housing affordability challenges rely on these arrangements. However, the public health risks associated with lead exposure do not

change based on the type of rental arrangement. Tenants renting rooms in older housing deserve the same safety protections as any other Maryland resident.

HB1549 would help close this gap by ensuring that the state's lead safety requirements apply consistently to rental arrangements involving individual rooms in pre-1978 housing.

In addition, it is important that **municipalities, including cities such as Greenbelt, maintain strong oversight to ensure that state and county housing and lead safety laws are consistently followed.** Effective coordination between state, county, and municipal enforcement helps ensure that tenants receive the protections the law is designed to provide.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to give a favorable report for HB1549.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Rawlins