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**SB 12 – Real Property –Air-Conditioning Requirement  
Hearing Before the Economic Matters Committee  
April 2, 2026**

**Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT**

To the Honorable Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

[Community Legal Services](#) (CLS) appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of SB 12, **with an amendment eliminating the preemption clause and instead conforming SB 12 to the House version**, HB 153, to allow local governments the ability to strengthen air conditioning standards in accordance with local conditions.

CLS provides free legal services to support and advocate for the rights and well-being of Maryland’s most under-served communities. Much of what we do involves supporting housing stability and ensuring healthy housing conditions for individuals and families, many of whom reside in rental apartments. For residents of Maryland, requiring apartment complexes to have air conditioning is not just a matter promoting comfort and convenience. Rather, it is a matter of protecting the health and safety of Maryland renters.

**State Law Should Set Minimum Baseline Habitability Standards – Not  
Prohibit Local Governments from Enacting Stronger Protections  
Where Stronger Protections are Needed**

A statewide air conditioning requirement with certain minimum standards in rental properties is an important step forward to ensure Maryland renters have safe housing conditions. However, in its current form, SB 12 prohibits local governments from setting standards that are more stringent than the statewide law, **effectively turning a statewide minimum standard into a statewide maximum standard**. This denies local governments authority to enact habitability standards that meet the needs of their locality and could, in fact, **weaken protections already in place in Prince George’s and Montgomery Counties, as well as other jurisdictions** that have already enacted more stringent air conditioning requirements.

**Statewide law generally sets a floor, not a ceiling, when it comes to protecting residents’ living conditions.** Maryland is not a one-size-fits-all state, especially when it comes to weather and housing conditions. This is why setting minimum statewide habitability protections while allowing local jurisdictions to enhance those protections according to local needs is a well-established practice in Maryland.

**Ensuring that local jurisdictions can respond to higher heat risks where needed and protect their residents accordingly is entirely consistent with existing Maryland policy and law.** Counties and municipalities already set and enforce their own housing codes, covering issues like occupancy, maintenance, sanitation, and safety standards. Allowing local jurisdictions to set their own air conditioning standards is simply a continuation of longstanding Maryland policy that allows local governments to respond to and retain authority over local needs.

**SB 12 Should be Amended to Conform to HB 153 by Removing the Preemption Clause and Instead Allowing Jurisdictions Flexibility to Meet the Needs of Their Residents**

Based on the foregoing, CLS respectfully urges this Committee to remove Lines 30-33 of Page 2 to SB 12 (Real Property 8-122 (D)), and replace those lines with Lines 30-33 of Page 2 to HB 153, (Real Property 8-122 (D)), as follows:

(D) THIS SECTION DOES NOT PRECLUDE A POLITICAL SUBDIVISION FROM ENACTING AND ENFORCING AIR-CONDITIONING REQUIREMENTS FOR RESIDENTIAL RENTAL UNITS THAT ARE MORE STRINGENT THAN THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION.

**CLS urges a favorable report on SB 12, *with the amendment noted above.***

Please feel free to reach out to Lisa Sarro, Community Legal Services Director of Litigation and Advocacy, with any questions at [sarro@clspgc.org](mailto:sarro@clspgc.org).