



House Bill 149

Committee: Economic Matters

Bill: House Bill 149 Fire Prevention - Assistant Fire Marshals, Residential Rental High-Rise Property Fire Safety Equipment, and Fire Alarm System Technicians

Date: February 19th, 2026

Position: Informational

The Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA) is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members consist of owners and managers of more than 214,000 rental housing homes in over 1015 apartment communities. Our members house over 571,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA also represents over 270 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

House Bill 149 (“HB 149”) requires the State Fire Marshal to adopt certain regulations governing the qualifications, training, standards, and certification of designees assistant/special fire marshals; mandates sprinklers and life-safety upgrades in substantially renovated residential high-rises; and requires the Fire Prevention Commission to license fire-alarm system technicians and companies.

HB 149 stems from the conclusion of the June 30th Final Report¹ from the “*Workgroup to Develop Fire Safety Best Practices for Pre-1974 High Rise Apartment Buildings*” as created by House Bill 823/2024. With membership on the Workgroup, MMHA had a representative as an active participant in the important discussions and debates surrounding fire safety for pre-1974 High Rise Apartment Buildings and their recommendations in the final report.

The major point of contention within the Workgroup discussions was at what point a residential rental high-rise building would be required to install automatic fire sprinklers in accordance with NFPA standards. MMHA views HB 149 as a reasonable compromise, as it would compel a “...RESIDENTIAL RENTAL HIGH-RISE BUILDING THAT IS UNDERGOING A SUBSTANTIAL RENOVATION.” as defined in 9-102(C)(3) to install automatic fire sprinklers. **Additionally, MMHA concurs with the Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington’s (AOBA) clarifying amendment that specifies the substantial renovation provision applies prospectively and for those that receive building permits on or after October 1, 2026.**

It is worth noting that for those housing providers that will make additional renovations as a result of the passage of this legislation, rents will increase on tenants at a time when the State has a dearth of affordable housing. Depending on the specific high-rise building, these renovations may lead to longer displacement periods and less housing being available for prospective renters.

Please contact Matthew Pipkin, Jr. at (443) 995-4342 or mpipkin@mmhaonline.org with any questions.

¹Workgroup to Develop Fire Safety Best Practices for Pre-1974 High-Rise Apartment Buildings. (2025, June 30). *Final Report (HB 823, Chapter 744, Acts of 2024)*. Office of the State Fire Marshal, Maryland Department of State Police. [https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDSP/HB823Ch744\(2\)\(2024\)_2025.pdf](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDSP/HB823Ch744(2)(2024)_2025.pdf)