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February 26, 2026

To: The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama
Chair, Economic Matters Committee

From: Karen S. Straughn
Consumer Protection Division

Re: House Bill 853 – Real Property – Regulation of Common Ownership Community
Managers (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General submits the following written testimony in support of House Bill 853 submitted by Delegate Marvin E. Holmes, Jr., et al. This bill provides for the registration, licensing and regulation of common ownership community property managers by the Department of Labor.

Many common ownership communities are run by volunteer boards of directors with little or no experience running a business. Often, they rely upon property management companies to assist them in complying with the laws, governing the associations, and in collecting and using association funds in a fiscally responsible manner. As a result, it is important to ensure the education, knowledge, and integrity of the property managers providing these services meet certain minimum standards. By imposing requirements for education and licensing of property managers, the legislature would protect thousands of citizens who reside in these communities and help to ensure that these communities are financially sustainable.

In the past, there have been property management companies that have misappropriated large sums of money from the communities they manage. Many have heard the horror stories of Legacy Management and the devastating impact its unscrupulous acts had on the communities it

managed. As recently as July of 2019, the Consumer Protection Division settled with another property management company that misappropriated over \$2 million dollars from homeowners and condominium associations, affecting over 1,500 individuals. In addition, the Consumer Protection Division recently won award against a property manager that was charging improper late fees to members of the associations it served and, without authorization, made a withdrawal from an association bank account. The damage that may be caused by unscrupulous or uneducated property managers clearly outweighs the costs to implement the procedures to register, license and regulate these entities.

We appreciate that the bill allows for initial funding to begin operation of the board, as well as the authority to adopt regulations that will be promulgated to support the ongoing operation of this important program.

For these reasons, we ask that the Economic Matters Committee return a favorable report on this bill.

cc: The Honorable Marvin E. Holmes, Jr.
The Honorable Adrian Bofo
The Honorable Regina T. Boyce
The Honorable Eric Ebersole
The Honorable Andrea Fletcher Harrison
The Honorable Anne Healey
The Honorable Mary A. Lehman
The Honorable Jeffrie E. Long, Jr.
The Honorable Edith J. Patterson
The Honorable Denise Roberts
The Honorable Kim Ross
The Honorable Sheila Ruth
The Honorable Dana Stein
The Honorable Deni Taveras
Members, Economic Matters Committee