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TESTIMONY OF ROBERT COOPER, JR.
BUSINESS MANAGER, UA SPRINKLER FITTERS LOCAL 669
BEFORE THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE
AND
THE HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE
HOUSE BILL 149 / SENATE BILL 513 – FAVORABLE

Chair Feldman, Chair Valderrama, and Honorable Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee and the House Economic Matters Committee:

On behalf of UA Sprinkler Fitters Local 669, and as a member union of the Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association, I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 149 / Senate Bill 513. Local 669's members install, inspect, and maintain fire sprinkler and suppression systems that protect lives and property in precisely the types of high-occupancy residential buildings addressed by this legislation. Our union represents a national workforce of sprinkler fitters whose training and safety standards are among the highest in the construction industry.

House Bill 149 / Senate Bill 513 is a measured, evidence-based improvement to Maryland's fire-safety framework. It strengthens qualifications and oversight for Assistant State Fire Marshals through uniform statewide standards, modernizes the definition of high-rise buildings consistent with nationally recognized fire-safety principles, and establishes a licensing program for fire alarm system technicians and companies. Fire alarm and sprinkler systems are life-critical infrastructure, and proper oversight and maintenance by qualified professionals is essential to public safety.

Local 669 strongly supports the bill's targeted approach to sprinkler installation in older residential rental high-rise buildings. Rather than imposing an indiscriminate, one-size-fits-all retrofit mandate, the bill appropriately ties sprinkler installation requirements to substantial renovation projects—defined as renovations equal to forty percent of a building's assessed value. This ensures that when significant capital investments are made, modern life-safety protections are incorporated in a reasonable and economically responsible manner.

Road Sprinkler Fitters Local Union No. 669

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From the perspective of the sprinkler-fitting workforce, this legislation promotes the outcomes Maryland residents expect: reliable fire-protection systems, competent oversight, and consistent enforcement. Local 669's apprenticeship and training programs emphasize technical competence, safety, and adherence to nationally accepted fire-protection standards. The public is best served when fire-protection systems are installed and maintained by properly trained professionals and when requirements.

Finally, effective implementation of this legislation will require adequate resources. Local 669 supports ensuring that fire-safety oversight, training, and enforcement functions contemplated by the bill are sufficiently funded so that the State can deliver the safety outcomes the legislation intends—particularly in high-rise residential settings where failures can have catastrophic consequences.

For these reasons, UA Sprinkler Fitters Local 669 respectfully urges a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 149 / Senate Bill 513.

Sincerely,

Robert Cooper, Jr.

Business Manager

UA Sprinkler Fitters Local 669