



Odette Ramos

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Testimony

**HB1341 – Home Improvement Contractors– Disaster Mitigation Services – Regulation and Prohibition
SUPPORT with Sponsor Amendments**

Chair Valderrama and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee:

I am writing to urge your support for **HB1341 – Home Improvement Contractors– Disaster Mitigation Services – Regulation and Prohibition**

As the Baltimore City Councilwoman representing the 14th District, I attend all of our fires. At each fire I have supported our residents who have just suffered significant trauma after escaping from danger and watching their house burn.

I also see predatory companies ready to take advantage of our residents who have just been through a crisis. These companies approach survivors of fires promising the homeowner they will secure the property once the fire department leaves. The challenge here is that they do more than boarding up, and charge insurance companies significantly; so much so that I have had two constituents run out of money to rebuild as a result.

HB1341 as amended creates a definition of these companies, assures they are regulated by the Maryland Home Improvement Commission, and allows for people who ended up signing with the company to get out of the contract within five days. It also allows jurisdictions to put limits on in-person solicitations.

By passing this legislation, you are saving residents who have been through significant trauma from falling into the hands of these emergency contractors who do not have the resident's best interest at heart.

In Baltimore City, I introduced a companion bill that sets up an emergency scene, and no unauthorized person can be admitted into that scene. Only first responders, city agencies and employees that assist residents can be admitted into the scene. Since the emergency scene takes place for hours or days, this gives the survivors of a fire or emergency time to contact their insurance companies and be strategic about the next steps for their homes and their lives. My bill passed unanimously and was implemented in Baltimore City in August of last year.

I am honored to work with Delegate Amprey on this issue, as we supported our residents together on site at a major fire in our districts that impacted 14 homes and where two lives were lost. We saw at this fire, and every fire firsthand the behavior of these companies. That's why we are before you today.

I urge your favorable report for HB1341 with the sponsor's amendments. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions. I can be reached on 410-396-4814 or via email at odette.ramos@baltimorecity.gov.

Respectfully Submitted:

Odette Ramos, Baltimore City Councilwoman, District 14