



TESTIMONY FOR HB1218 – Department of Housing and Community Development – Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties – Intervention Plan – FAVORABLE

Bill Sponsors: Delegates Wilkins and Phillips
Committee: Economic Matters
Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition
Person Submitting: Jessica Gorski, Executive Committee
Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Gorski, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB1218 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. We are a statewide coalition of grassroots organizations representing more than 30,000 Marylanders across every legislative district. Our mission is to ensure that state policy protects people’s lives, health, and dignity, especially for residents living in unsafe or unhealthy housing conditions, who face some of the most significant barriers to stability, well-being, and long-term health.

HB1218 strengthens that commitment by requiring the Department of Housing and Community Development, through the Office of Landlord and Tenant Affairs and in consultation with the Attorney General, to develop a comprehensive plan to identify properties with severe health and safety risks in Maryland and take appropriate actions to address them. The bill also requires the Department to submit the plan and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by August 31, 2027.

These protections are urgently needed.

Across Maryland, too many renters live in properties with chronic code violations, persistent hazards, mold, pests, structural instability, and other dangerous conditions. These issues are not isolated incidents; they are systemic failures that disproportionately affect low-income families, seniors, people with disabilities, and communities of color. HB1218 recognizes that these conditions are not merely inconveniences; they are direct threats to residents’ health and safety.

The bill ensures that the State develops a coordinated, evidence-based plan that includes:

- A process for identifying properties with severe, ongoing health and safety risks.
- Mechanisms for residents, local agencies, and tenant organizations to report hazardous conditions.
- Strategies for intervention, including enforcement actions, mandatory repairs, relocation plans, and penalties for noncompliant landlords.
- Recommendations for statutory changes to strengthen tenant protections and improve housing safety statewide.

These measures create a uniform, statewide framework that supports tenants, strengthens accountability, and ensures that Maryland's housing system protects rather than endangers residents.

HB1218 also has significant implications for public health and access to healthcare. Unsafe housing conditions are directly linked to asthma, respiratory illness, lead exposure, injury, chronic stress, and preventable emergency room visits. When families live in hazardous environments, their health deteriorates, their medical costs increase, and their ability to maintain stable employment and education suffers. By identifying and addressing high-risk properties, HB1218 helps prevent avoidable health crises and reduces the burden on Maryland's healthcare system.

This bill aligns squarely with the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. It promotes equity, strengthens tenant protections, and ensures that no Marylander is forced to live in conditions that threaten their health or safety. **Housing is a foundational determinant of health, and HB1218 takes a critical step toward ensuring that all residents have access to safe, stable, and dignified homes.**

We respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on HB1218.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jessica Gorski
Executive Committee
Maryland Legislative Coalition