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March 5, 2026

TO: The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama
Chair, Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Tiffany Clark
Director, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: House Bill 1218 – Department of Housing and Community Development -
Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan (Letter of
Information)

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) respectfully submits this letter to provide information to the Committee regarding House Bill 1218 - Department of Housing and Community Development – Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties – Intervention Plan. House Bill 1218 requires the Department of Housing and Community Development's Office of Tenant and Landlord Affairs (OTLA), in collaboration with the Attorney General, to develop a plan identifying severe health and safety risk properties and recommending interventions to address predatory, noncompliant, and negligent landlords, with a final report due to the Governor and General Assembly by August 31, 2027.

The OAG shares the sponsors' commitment to protecting Maryland renters from substandard and hazardous housing conditions. As the Committee considers this legislation, we want to ensure you have complete information about the existing enforcement landscape and certain operational considerations that may bear on the study's design and ultimate recommendations.

Existing Enforcement Structure and Local Authority. Housing code standards and associated enforcement authority in Maryland are administered at the local level. Each of Maryland's counties and municipalities has adopted its own housing code, with its own inspection infrastructure, violation standards, and fine schedules. This localized structure means there is significant variation in housing standards and enforcement capacity across the State. Any plan developed under this bill that contemplates statewide fine structures or centralized enforcement

This bill letter is a statement of the Office of Attorney General's policy position on the referenced pending legislation. For a legal or constitutional analysis of the bill, Members of the House and Senate should consult with the Counsel to the General Assembly, Sandy Brantley. She can be reached at 410-946-5600 or sbrantley@oag.state.md.us.

would need to carefully account for this existing framework to avoid conflict or duplication with local authority. The OAG would encourage the study to examine how a State-level intervention plan can complement, rather than supplant, the work of local code enforcement agencies.

OAG's Current Role in Landlord-Tenant Matters. The OAG's Consumer Protection Division currently receives and responds to landlord-tenant complaints from Maryland residents. To the extent the bill envisions a new complaint referral structure coordinated between OTLA and the OAG, the study should assess how such a system would work with the Division's existing complaint intake processes to avoid duplicative or conflicting pathways for tenants seeking relief.

A Statutory Mandate Is Not Necessary to Achieve Coordination. The OAG and DHCD's OTLA have an existing working relationship and are well-positioned to coordinate on landlord-tenant issues through existing channels. We do not believe a statutory obligation to conduct this study is warranted at this time. To the extent the sponsors are seeking better coordination between OTLA and the OAG on severe housing conditions, we would welcome the opportunity to explore that through direct engagement with OTLA rather than through a legislatively mandated process.

We appreciate Delegates Wilkins and Phillips' focus on this critical issue and the Committee's commitment to improving housing conditions for Maryland renters. The OAG remains available to provide additional information or technical assistance as this legislation advances.

Cc: Members of the Committee