



SB0012 – Real Property - Residential Rental Apartments - Air-Conditioning Requirements

Hearing before the House Economic Matters Committee

April 2, 2026

Position: Favorable With Amendment

Maryland Legal Aid submits its written testimony on SB0012 at the request of the bill sponsor Senator Chris West.

Maryland Legal Aid is a non-profit law firm that provides free legal services to the State’s low-income and vulnerable residents. Our 11 offices serve residents in each of Maryland’s 24 jurisdictions and handle a range of civil legal matters, including for Marylanders struggling with housing insecurity. Maryland Legal Aid advocates for the right of low-income renters to live in safe housing. We support SB0012 with amendments.

SB0012 provides a targeted policy to tackle the increasingly dangerous heat hazards in apartment buildings that lack air conditioning. Its focus is on the future of multi-family rental housing across the state. SB0012 requires air conditioning, capable of maintaining a temperature of 80°F or lower, in apartment buildings of 10 or more units. The bill drafting is unclear whether this requirement applies only to (1) properties that are newly constructed or have been substantially renovated or (2) to those properties *and* properties with existing air conditioning units. Maryland Legal Aid interprets subsections (b) and (c) in the bill to mean that the air conditioning requirements in subsection (c) apply only to the newly constructed or renovated properties specified in subsection (b). We urge the Committee to clarify this important aspect of the bill.

Additionally, SB 12, as amended in the Senate, includes an express preemption clause with broad negative effect on localities and their constituents. On Page 2 lines 30-33, the bill states the intent to preempt and supersede any local law – including the existing air conditioning requirement ordinances in Prince George’s County and Montgomery County, each of which apply to more property types than those specified in SB 12. Maryland Legal Aid urges the Committee to strike this preemption clause.

Overall, SB0012 would help to mitigate the dangerous impacts of extreme heat in our renter communities. Failure to address this environmental hazard exposes Maryland renters to continued risk of physical and other harms. Moreover, low-income people and people of color disproportionately bear the risk of these harms. For these reasons, **Maryland Legal Aid urges the Committee’s “favorable with amendments” report on SB0012.**

If you have any questions, please contact:

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