



## **House Bill 130 – Public Safety - Short-Term Rental Units - Fire Safety**

### **Position: Support with Amendments**

Maryland REALTORS® appreciates the intent of HB 1221 to enhance guest safety in short-term rental properties. However, we believe the bill as drafted requires significant amendments to address implementation concerns:

- HB 1221 requires a “diagram of all exits” to be posted within a short-term rental property, but the bill does not define whether “all exits” includes only primary doors or also windows and other secondary means of egress. In large or multi-level homes, a detailed diagram identifying every potential exit point may create confusion rather than clarity during an emergency. We should seek solutions that promote guest safety without overwhelming occupants with unnecessary detail.
- The bill also requires posting emergency telephone numbers. Because 911 is the universal emergency number throughout Maryland, requiring additional local emergency numbers may cause confusion or delay in a crisis. It is counterproductive for occupants to call non-emergency numbers of individual services rather than the coordinated emergency response summoned by 911.
- HB 1221 mandates a working fire extinguisher but does not define compliance standards such as size, rating, placement, or inspection requirements. In addition, some fire safety professionals caution that encouraging guests to use a fire extinguisher may unintentionally delay evacuation if individuals attempt to control a fire rather than exit immediately. It is our concern that this provision will undermine the fact that evacuation is the primary priority in an emergency.
- The requirement for interconnected smoke alarms presents practical challenges, particularly in older housing stock. Hard-wired interconnected systems can be prohibitively expensive to retrofit, while wireless interconnected systems may present compliance concerns if connectivity is interrupted due to service outages or equipment failure. The bill should allow battery-operated systems that meet recognized safety standards, provide flexibility for older homes where retrofitting hard-wired systems is impracticable, and clarify that temporary connectivity interruptions beyond an owner’s control do not automatically constitute a violation.
- Finally, as drafted, HB 1221 could escalate operational costs and create substantial compliance burdens for short-term rental operators. Many of our members have indicated that, to reduce potential liability exposure, they would

feel compelled to conduct physical inspections prior to each rental, potentially multiple times per week during peak seasons. The bill does not cap inspection fees, establish a clear cure period for correcting minor violations, define a reinspection process, or provide a structured cost framework for follow-up inspections. Without these guardrails, operators may face unpredictable and potentially excessive costs. The legislation should include reasonable caps on inspection and reinspection fees, provide a meaningful cure period for non-life-threatening violations, clearly define enforcement timelines and processes, and distinguish between minor administrative deficiencies and immediate life-safety hazards.

Maryland REALTORS<sup>®</sup> supports reasonable measures that enhance guest safety. With thoughtful amendments to clarify requirements, align standards with best practices, cap inspection costs, provide a fair cure process, and ensure feasibility—particularly for older properties— we can achieve intended safety goals without imposing unintended burdens.

We respectfully urge the Committee to adopt these amendments and collaborate with stakeholders to improve HB 1221.

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