

PJC HB 1218 FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Albert Turner

Position: FAV



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HB 1218: Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan

Hearing before the House Economic Matters Committee on March 5, 2025

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a nonprofit public interest law firm that stands with tenants to protect and expand their rights to safe, habitable, affordable, and non-discriminatory housing and their rights to fair and equal treatment by Maryland's landlord-tenant laws, courts, and agencies. The PJC actively works towards instigating systemic changes to establish a society founded on justice. PJC seeks the Committee's **Favorable report on HB 1218** as it is a critical measure to finally holding bad acting landlords accountable.

Across the state, too many residential properties are repeatedly cited for severe and unhealthy conditions such as rodent infestations, bed bugs, safety issues, and major structural problems. These properties follow a harmful cycle where they are inspected and cited by local governments and housing agencies but continue to expose families to the same dangerous conditions. Safe and decent housing is a fundamental foundation for healthy families, thriving neighborhoods, and a strong state economy. Yet, without a coordinated statewide strategy, the dangers to a tenant's safety often go unidentified until it is too late.

This important legislation will require the Office of Tenant and Landlord Affairs (OTLA) in consultation with the Attorney General, to develop a statewide plan to identify residential properties that pose severe health and safety risks and to give clear criteria for identifying properties and effective interventions to address predatory, non-compliant, and negligent multi-unit rental properties across the state.

Under **HB 1218**, the OTLA would have the power and ability to fine habitual violators, create a tenant rent escrow to hold rent from bad acting landlords, mandate pest eradication plans, relocate tenants, and/or file lawsuits against landlords for violations of habitability laws.

This thoughtful, data-driven approach will help Maryland protect vulnerable residents and reduce preventable injuries and illnesses caused by unsafe housing conditions. It will also assist local governments and community partners in aligning their efforts with statewide goals, improving inspection and enforcement processes, and ensuring that landlords are held accountable for basic habitability standards.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on **HB 1218**.

HB1218 Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties In

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



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

Progressive Maryland. FAV. HB1218.pdf

Uploaded by: Erica Puentes

Position: FAV



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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Bill Title: HB1218 - Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

To: Economic Matters Committee

From: Erica Puentes, on behalf of Progressive Maryland

Date: March 3, 2026

Dear Chair Valderrama and members of the Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Erica Puentes, and I am Legislative Coordinator for Progressive Maryland, a statewide member led advocacy organization promoting racial, social, economic, and environmental justice. Progressive Maryland has over 120,000 individual members, supporters, and organizational affiliates statewide and works alongside hundreds of community, religious, labor and other grassroots allies to educate the public and build popular support for progressive victories. A robust part of our membership is organized into various tenant associations in apartment complexes across Prince George's County and Montgomery County. Our dedication to housing justice, fairness and equity leads **Progressive Maryland to support HB1218.**

Progressive Maryland members and tenants frequently talk about their experiences dealing with substandard housing conditions due to negligent landlords. Despite multiple county level interventions, many of the buildings organized by Progressive Maryland tenant associations including the Enclave in Montgomery County, have seen little to no improvement. Landlords continue to exercise unchecked power, neglecting essential maintenance and repairs. The Enclave is a key example, as it has been on Montgomery County's "Troubled Property" list and has not even submitted its last required corrective action plan. Meanwhile, tenants continue to deal with extreme rodent, pest, and mold infestations, chronic infrastructure issues and compromised living conditions, including recurrent hot water outages, ceiling leaks and malfunctioning elevators.

These issues are so pervasive that Enclave Tenant Association members have coined the term "Housing Injustice PTSD" – the exhaustion from futile complaints and unaddressed issues. The state must be granted the power to intervene to support tenants. We encourage the Maryland General Assembly to put tenants over landlord profits and advance bills that ensure better housing conditions for Maryland residents. **We urge the Economic Matters Committee to issue a favorable report on HB1218.**

HB1218_FAV_EconAction.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: FAV



HB1218: Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan

Position: Favorable

March 5, 2026

The Honorable Kris Valderrama, Chair
Economic Matters Committee
Room 230, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
cc: Members, House Economic Matters

Chair Valderrama and Members of the Committee:

Economic Action Maryland Fund urges a favorable report on HB1218, which would expand the duties of the Office of Landlord and Tenant Affairs to create a meaningful database and set of interventions for properties that are in continued noncompliance with or violation of local codes, or hazardous or distressed.

For the vast majority of the state, there is little to no meaningful licensing and code enforcement authority to tackle landlords whose properties are health and safety risks. Economic Action Maryland Fund's tenant advocacy program advances housing justice in Maryland through direct service, research, and advocacy. We assist with landlord-tenant issues and provide tenants' rights information and education. Since 2019, out of almost 6500 tenant households assisted, 1,365 - 21% - of those were related to habitability issues. Not all of those complaints would rise to the level of uninhabitability required to fall under this legislation, but it speaks to how pervasive health and safety issues are with Maryland's housing supply.

This bill would create a mechanism to address the worst of the worst properties in Maryland, those that are in persistent and prolonged violation of codes, distressed, or hazardous. Addressing these homes not only provides much needed assistance to tenants, but would stabilize neighborhoods that suffer from the safety hazards and blight these properties create.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB1218.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Bevan-Dangel
Deputy Director

Economic Action (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) champions economic rights and housing justice through advocacy, research, consumer education, and direct service. Our 12,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland.

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Marceline White · Marceline@EconAction.org | Jennifer Bevan-Dangel · Jennifer@EconAction.org

2026 Department of Housing and Community Developme

Uploaded by: Jheanelle Wilkins

Position: FAV

JHEANELLE WILKINS
Legislative District 20
Montgomery County

Chair, Ways and Means Committee

Rules and Executive Nominations
Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

MARCH 5, 2026

House Bill 1218: Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to present **House Bill 1218 - Department of Housing and Community Development – Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties – Intervention Plan**. This legislation would require the Office of Tenant and Landlord Affairs, in collaboration with the Attorney General, to develop a statewide plan to identify and address severe health and safety risk properties.

Every Marylander deserves to live in safe, habitable housing. Yet too many tenants continue to endure chronic code violations, unsafe conditions, repeated failures to remediate hazards, and neglect from predatory or noncompliant landlords. These conditions threaten residents' health, destabilize families, and undermine community well-being.

House Bill 1218 directs the Department of Housing to create a clear process for identifying persistently hazardous rental properties and predatory landlord practices, establish referral pathways for tenants and community organizations, and develop meaningful interventions. These interventions may include corrective action plans, mandatory repairs, follow-up inspections, financial penalties, legal action, tenant protections such as escrow, and temporary relocation when necessary. **House Bill 1218** would also require recommendations for any statutory changes needed to better protect tenants in Maryland.

I'm proud to champion this bill to strengthen oversight and safeguard the health and safety of Maryland renters. For these reasons, I urge your **favorable vote on House Bill 1218: Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jheanelle Wilkins".

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins

Testimony in support of HB1218 - Severe Health and

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB1218_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

03/05/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz Frederick,
MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#1218- POSITION: FAVORABLE

**Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties
- Intervention Plan**

TO: Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian and members of the Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#1218, **Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan**

Under existing Maryland law tenants are protected from severe health and safety risks—such as lack of heat, water, electricity, structural hazards, or severe infestations—through the legally implied [Warranty of Habitability](#), which requires landlords to keep properties fit for human habitation. If issues are not addressed promptly after written notice, tenants can take legal actions, including reporting to housing inspectors, filing for [rent escrow](#) (paying rent to the court), or [terminating the lease](#).¹

However, Maryland needs to find and remediate severe health and safety risk properties in the State and give authorities the ability to take actions to fix identified problems.

The bill will require the Department of Housing and Community Development, Office of Landlord and Tenant Affairs in consultation with the Attorney General to develop a plan to identify severe health and safety risk properties in the State and take related actions; and requiring the Department to submit the plan and certain recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before August 31, 2027.

The plan and the recommendations made can guide future actions by the Governor and the General Assembly to increase tenant safety and health.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#1218.

¹ Google AI Search “protecting tenants from Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties”

HB1218 - LBCMD 2026 Priority Support Letter.pdf

Uploaded by: Ufuoma Agarin

Position: FAV



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March 5, 2026

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Chair Kriselda Valderrama
Economic Matters Committee
231 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Valderrama and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for House Bill 1218 -Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan. The bill requires the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Office of Tenant and Landlord Affairs to work with the Attorney General to create an agenda plan to identify rental properties in the state that have serious health and safety problems. The plan outlines how the state will identify these hazardous properties and develop an action plan to address them. The House bill is essential as it identifies and addresses rental properties that are putting individuals' lives at risk due to the health and safety conditions of the property. **This bill is a 2026 legislative priority for the Black Caucus.**

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland believes that HB1218 will allow us to identify, investigate, and intervene with unhealthy properties. HB1218 targets to hold individuals accountable for maintaining the unsafe and unhealthy properties by creating a criterion and having an effective plan to address predatory, non-compliant, and negligent unit rental properties across the state. HB1218 will allow us to break off the cycle and protect the health and safety of families who rent their homes.

Additionally, across the state, many residential properties have serious unhealthy conditions that include bed bugs, safety issues, structural problems, and rodent infestations that affect many lives. House Bill 1218 overall helps improve the community by addressing needed accountability, maintaining inspections, and creating a plan to have a safe and healthy community.

For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports House Bill 1218.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland

HB1218 - Maryland Legal Aid - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Zafar Shah

Position: FAV



House Bill 1218
**Department of Housing and Community Development – Severe Health and
Safety Risk Properties – Intervention Plan**

Hearing before the House Economic Matters Committee
On March 5, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits its written and oral testimony on HB1218 at the request of bill sponsor Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins.

MLA is a non-profit law firm that provides free legal services to the State’s low-income and vulnerable residents. We serve residents in each of Maryland’s 24 jurisdictions and handle a range of civil legal matters, including housing disputes involving substandard conditions. MLA urges the Committee’s favorable report on HB1218, which requires Maryland to establish a comprehensive plan to hold landlords accountable for dangerous property conditions and predatory practices.

Throughout the state, renters face rampant conditions of disrepair, deferred maintenance, and exploitative management practices. While some jurisdictions are resourced with code enforcement divisions and rental licensing programs, others lack these resources. Moreover, in this largely complaint-driven patchwork of localized solutions, Maryland lacks an overarching, unifying agenda for ensuring safe, healthy, well-managed housing across all jurisdictions. Just as the State seeks “housing certainty” for developers on the supply side, the State must also seek housing certainty for renters on the demand side.

To that end, HB 1218 requires the Office of Tenant and Landlord Affairs (OTLA) of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to join with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) in establishing a statewide plan to:

- (1) Identify “severe health and safety risk properties” in the State;
- (2) Expand OTLA to address severe health and safety risk properties in the State; and
- (3) Provide effective interventions to mitigate predatory, noncompliant, and negligent landlords of multi-unit rental properties in the State

Importantly, HB 1218 does not set targets on all landlords. Instead, it focuses on rental properties that routinely fail to meet basic health and safety standards. This focus includes properties in “continued noncompliance with local housing codes, resulting in chronic unsafe housing conditions”; “severely distressed rental properties”; properties with “repeated cycles of violations,

citations, and failures to remediate”; and “persistently hazardous” rental properties.

The identification of such properties, at the state agency level, will create a centralized data set for targeted enforcement and other interventions that does not currently exist and has been sorely needed. Similarly, HB 1218 requires the State to create a process to identify predatory landlord practices.

The bill mandates a plan that determines appropriate benchmarks for mitigation of dangerous conditions, financial penalties, and legal actions. DHCD and OAG are tasked, under the bill, to recommend statutory reforms that “provide effective mitigation and relief for tenants.”

Operating throughout 24 jurisdictions, Maryland Legal Aid works in collaboration with individual renters, tenant associations, local housing agencies, and DHCD to find timely remedies for dangerous conditions and predatory management practices. HB 1218 reflects the reality that we see on the ground – in which no actors are fully equipped to tackle housing precarity on their own. For instance, in a recent case involving a failed heating system, Maryland Legal Aid represented individual renters, assisted formation of their tenant council, filed a multi-plaintiff Tenant Safety Act case against their landlord, and then consulted with the local housing agency and state DHCD to identify financing options for the landlord’s court-mandated repairs. And yet, the case demonstrated the absence of local-state alignment, communication, and resource-sharing that the renters needed to avoid a harshly cold winter and to achieve long-term stability. In absence of that, many of the residents simply moved out. HB 1218 offers the prospect that Maryland could connect the dots and materially reduce hardship among low-income renters living in substandard housing.

For these reasons, **we urge a favorable report on HB 1218.**

If you have any questions, please contact:

Zafar Shah
Advocacy Director for Human Right to Housing
zshah@mdlab.org | (410) 951-7672

MMHA - 2026 - HB 1218 - OAG - Interevention Plan.p

Uploaded by: Ashley Clark

Position: UNF



Bill Title: House Bill 1218, Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan

Committee: House Economic Matters Committee

Date: March 5, 2026

Position: Unfavorable

This testimony is offered on behalf of the Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA). MMHA is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members consist of owners and managers of more than 214,000 rental housing homes in over 1015 apartment communities. Our members house over 571,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA also represents over 270 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

House Bill 1218 (“HB 1218”) enables the Department of Housing and Community Development, Office of Landlord and Tenant Affairs (“OLTA”) in conjunction with the Attorney General to develop a plan to identify severe health and safety risk properties in the State. Additionally, they are tasked with creating a plan to provide effective interventions to mitigate predatory, noncompliant, and negligent actions by landlords of multi-unit rental properties in the State. This plan and their recommendations must be submitted to the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly on or before August 31, 2027.

From our lens, HB 1218 tasks OLTA and the Attorney General to build an entirely new bureaucracy to “identify” the very properties that local jurisdictions already flag for “predatory landlord practices.” It imposes a menu of duplicative sanctions: fines, investigative cost recovery, mandatory tenant escrow, repair timelines, mandatory relocation plans, and more. This duplicity invites a new layer of conflicting standards, dueling penalties, and more litigation making it that much more difficult for landlords to navigate compliance standards.

Local code-enforcement offices already have the duty and the tools (civil penalties, criminal citations, receivership, license revocation, and, where conditions are truly dangerous, emergency condemnation) necessary to compel immediate remediation of health-and-safety violations. At the same time, Maryland’s decades-old Rent Escrow Law (Real Property § 8-211) gives every tenant a clear, expedited court remedy: rent is placed in escrow until a judge is satisfied that violations have been cured. These two systems - one driven by trained inspectors, the other by tenants themselves - have proven sufficient to identify and correct “severe health and safety risk properties” without adding a new State layer.

The bill’s definition of a “severe health and safety risk property” is also sweeping, subjective, and overly broad which will likely lead to the unintended consequence of implicating more landlords than the egregious actors that the Sponsors intend to address with this legislation. For an example, the bill highlights any property that “routinely” fails to meet “basic” standards,



or that has “repeated cycles of violations.” A single over-worked county inspector who files multiple notices on an aging, yet occupied, multi-unit rental property could trigger State intervention - even when local enforcement timelines have not yet run and even when no judge has found any violation to be dangerous. In practice, the bill risks turning routine code enforcement into a State-run “name-and-shame” list, chilling investment in older but desperately needed workforce housing.

Lastly, this bill sunsets in eighteen months - long enough to create new regulations, case-by-case adjudications, and litigation exposure, but too short to demonstrate measurable public-health benefits. Thus, landlords will be left defending themselves in two forums (local and State) for the same alleged defect, while taxpayers foot the bill for a redundant enforcement structure. If the General Assembly wishes to accelerate remediation of unsafe rental housing, we believe the better path is to ensure that every local jurisdiction has adequate inspection staff and that resources are made available to tenants (that they can easily access) of the powerful Rent Escrow remedy that already exists. It is for these reasons that MMHA respectfully urges the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on HB 1218.

Please contact Aaron Greenfield at agreenfield@mmhaonline.org or Ashley Clark at ashley.clark@mdlobbyist.com with any questions or concerns.

2026_03_05 HB 1218 DHCD Severe Health Intervention

Uploaded by: Tiffany Clark

Position: INFO

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STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

ANTHONY G. BROWN
Attorney General

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