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February 27, 2026

Senator Brian J. Feldman
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: **FAVORABLE – SB872** - Reduction of Lead Risk in Housing – Rental Dwelling Unit - Definition

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) writes in support of Senate Bill 872. This Bill would remedy a current fault in Maryland law by expanding the Maryland Reduction of Lead in Housing Law to include single-room tenancies, which are currently not protected by the subtitle at all.

GHHI has advocated for tenants' rights in Maryland and throughout the country for over three decades. GHHI supported the enactment of the groundbreaking Maryland Reduction of Lead Risk in Housing Law in 1994 and has worked to help reduce childhood lead poisoning in our state since then by 99%. Today, GHHI provides tenants' rights assistance, rental property owner compliance assistance, and legal representation of tenants statewide in Maryland for the repair of lead hazards and other hazardous conditions in tenant-occupied homes. In addition to serving as the President and CEO of GHHI, I also serve as the Chair of the Maryland Lead Poisoning Prevention Commission and serve or have served as a member of the EPA Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee, the CDC Lead Exposure and Prevention Advisory Committee, and the Maryland Green and Healthy Homes Task force among others.

Maryland Environment Article § 6-801(u) defines what constitutes an affected "rental dwelling unit" under the Reduction of Lead in Housing Subtitle, and therefore what is protected by the subtitle. Under § 6-801(u), "rental dwelling unit" is defined as "a room or group of rooms that form a single independent habitable rental unit for permanent occupation by one or more individuals that has living facilities with permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation." The same language has existed since the enactment of the subtitle in 1994.

However, the current language of § 6-801(u) **excludes** tenants who rent single rooms that themselves do not independently from the rest of the home or building include "permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation" from coverage under the

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This means that pregnant women or parents with young children who live in single-room pre-1978 rental units are not being protected against lead hazards. Not only does this harm tenants who are most impacted by the affordability crisis, but this also contradicts the stated purpose of the Subtitle in Md. Environment Article § 6-802. According to § 6-802, “[t]he purpose of this subtitle is to reduce the incidence of childhood lead poisoning, while maintaining the stock of available affordable rental housing.” This legislation is necessary so that tenants who rent single-room rental units are afforded the same protection as other tenants in Maryland who rent larger rental units by requiring these properties to meet lead risk reduction standards and certification.


Furthermore, to the extent that stakeholders are concerned about whether this legislation would possibly include other kinds of rental properties not used for landlord/tenant relationships, this legislation is drafted to address those concerns by still requiring that a tenant be provided access to “permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation” as part of their tenancy even if they are not included in the room they are renting. For regulatory purposes, MDE can require that landlords only must ensure that the spaces that tenants are given access to as part of their tenancy must be addressed for lead hazard remediation. Landlords are already accustomed to this kind of practice, since they do not have to address potential lead hazards on their property in areas which are “secured and inaccessible to occupants[.]” Md. Environment Article § 6-801(u)(2)(iii).

Fiscal & Policy Note

Finally, in addition to the considerations above for improving protections tenants living in unprotected lead-affected rental units, this Bill would also increase funding for MDE program staff. According to the current Fiscal and Policy Note, if SB872 were enacted into law, special fund revenues would increase by an estimated \$1.4 million in Fiscal Year 2027 from registration fees, for a net increase of over \$1 million in state revenue after accounting for increases in expenditures resulting from passing this Bill. These funds would help to further expand MDE’s Lead Poisoning Prevention Program and its staffing capacity to implement the law statewide.

For these reasons, we request a Favorable Report on SB872.

Sincerely,

Signed by:

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Ruth Ann Norton
President and CEO