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Addressing Hidden Threats to Residents in  
Maryland's Unique Affordable Housing Communities

SB 729 Reforming Maryland's 1980 Mobile Home Act to Protect Residents  
SB 940 Environment – Mobile Home Parks – Water Quality Testing  
([Maryland Code, Real Property § 8A-101](#))

Callers to the office of Senator Henson (March 2025) pleaded for help to get water service restored in one of the four privately-owned, south county mobile home communities. For two days and going into the third, residents were without water to drink or use in their homes. Their calls to the mobile home community owners to obtain water went on deaf ears. Fearful of retaliation by the community owners, callers refused to leave their names and contact information. However, this disruption of water services, receiving discoloration and foul-smelling water, being charge together with unrelated and unexplained costs for services not received, and challenges to lease renewals was an ongoing pattern experienced by tenants for nearly five years!

**Unique Affordable Housing Communities.** With over 437 mobile home communities documented throughout the state of MD – the larger of which are in the southern, northeast, and eastern shore -- 2024 Penn State Research Report<sup>1</sup>. As constitutes of the state's senators and delegates, residents in these communities are retirees, elderly, veterans, county, and state employees, as well as families at the margin or below the average median income level, such as immigrants, people with disabilities, and others in need of below market-rate housing.

While they may either own or rent their units, residents are all charged a specific fee to rent the space the unit sets on as well paying separately for utilities and any other charges the owners want to pass on. And while the term "mobile home communities" may be similar to what is referred to as "manufactured" homes – they are not. They do not own the space they sit on and are unable to move them from their pad.

**Threats to their Survival.** Today's property owners of mobile home communities are private investors – many out-of-state – and likely with the mission to either increase their profitability or remove the housing, rezone the property, and build expensive homes. Neglect of the infrastructure and community needs is the norm to move the tenants out of their units. When questions or concerns are voiced about the situations they are experiencing, residents are threatened with

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<sup>1</sup> Protections of (IM) mobile homeowners from the consequences of (IM) mobile home park closures-Kenneth Baar, Attorney Planner, Penn State Law Review-Article 779-780 (Vol.128.3)

eviction and/or receive additional charges without justification. Residents are typically only allowed a one-year unrenewable lease, which includes discriminatory illegal practices. Existing federal and state laws protecting landlord-tenant relationships, the maintenance of a community's infrastructure, and how non-related costs are passed on to tenants, are inadequate to protect the ability of these vulnerable residents to remain in these affordable communities.

Maryland's mobile home residents are not alone experiencing these threats. Legislators in the states of Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, Oregon, Massachusetts, Washington, Rhode Island, and others have adopted regulatory changes protecting residents' ability to continue to live in these affordable communities.

**Senator Shaneka Henson (D.30) and Delegate Marvin Holmes (D.23) have teamed up to Reform Maryland's 1980 Mobile Home Act, ([Md Code, Real Property § 8A-101](#)).** The result of a six-month evaluation by a work group established by the Senator addressing the changes needed, key points in the legislation include.

- *Clarifying definitions that have recently been disputed and adds the definition of "rent."*
- *Clarifying the consequences of a park owner's failure to comply with existing law and provides an unqualified resident an opportunity to become a "qualified resident" if the park owner did not properly notify the resident of the requirements.*
- *Clarifying the severity and meaning of "violations" that can disqualify a resident from a continued right to a tenancy.*
- *Establishing new prohibitions on rental agreements consistent with those already existing in Title 8 and adds some prohibitions not yet existing in Title 8.*
- *Clarifying that discriminatory enforcement of non-discriminatory rules is still discriminatory. What owners can do to tenants/residents and not.*
- *Requiring that a notice be issued before violations of park rules are published and that they can carry a fee.*
- *Establishing a presumption that a fee for violation of a park rules exceeding 5% of rent is unreasonably high.*
- *Clarifying the meaning of code section 8A-503, which provides that a park owner cannot upcharge in any fashion for utilities, after recent legal disputes.*
- *Making protections consistent with the State Government Article § 20-702, regarding discrimination.*

- *Adding a provision that the park owner be available for contact in case of complaints and emergencies and that a private right of action for violations is placed in section 8A-801.*
- *Making security deposit rules consistent with those in Title 8.*
- *Clarifying the existing law, which is still inconsistent after legislative amendments of the 1980s.*
- *Adding language mimicking 8-601, regarding the availability of jury trials.*
- *Establishing a presumption, based on a similar analysis in Carroll v. HOC, that a dispute about qualified resident status entitles a tenant to a jury trial.*
- *Providing procedures for eviction by which the park owner must safeguard a tenants' property if the park owner does not actually remove the mobile home from the site in an eviction.*
- *Specifying eviction procedures between the park owner and subtenants.*
- *Strengthening the anti-retaliation provisions by increasing penalties to 6 months' rent and by eliminating the time restriction, which has a disproportionately negative effect on mobile home residents relative to traditional tenants.*
- *Adding a 60-day warrant requirement, to be consistent with § 8A-1701 and to prevent execution of stale judgments.*
- *Providing that a park owner, in a holdover eviction, must plead and prove compliance with existing law on qualified residents.*
- *Expressly covering mobile home residents under the Access to Counsel in Evictions law.*

Senator Henson's second bill, SB940 – Environment-Mobile Home Parks – Water Quality Testing -- addresses the enforcement of the state's water quality regulations relating to private community systems throughout Maryland. A hearing is scheduled for March 3, 2026, by the Senate Environment, Education and Energy Committee at 1:00 p.m., in the Senate Office Building. Delegate Jeffrie Long (D27B) is the house sponsor.

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