

# **SB941**

Uploaded by: Calvin Ball

Position: FAV



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

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March 11, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of Senate Bill 0941**: Economic Matters – Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties – Intervention Plan

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

I want to express my appreciation to Senator Henson for her leadership on Senate Bill 0941 Department of Housing and Community Development – Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties – Intervention Plan (SB0941). This legislation would require the State to identify severe health and safety risk properties and provide effective interventions to mitigate predatory, non-compliant and negligent landlords of multi-unit rental properties.

In Howard County, approximately 30 percent of households live in rental properties. Unfortunately, too many of our tenants face unresolved or reoccurring habitability issues that can affect their health and safety.

Howard County's Division of Rental Licensing in the Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits is responsible for licensing rental properties and requiring compliance with health and safety standards. The Department has a process to identify at risk properties, accept complaints and referrals from tenants and other organizations and determine appropriate interventions through licensing requirements, fines, and legal remedies.

Howard County's Office of Consumer Protection provides support to tenants and the Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits where properties with severe health and safety risks are identified.

Launched on January 30, 2026, our LIVE (**L**andlord accountability, **I**nteragency coordination, **V**ictim protection and **E**vacuation prevention) initiative, is taking steps to support tenants and landlords by exploring an increase in rental housing enforcement and new avenues to resolve disputes, providing greater accessibility to landlord/tenant education and resources, and offering more interagency coordination to eliminate delays in complaint processing.

Since 2019, the County's:

- Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) has received on average 600 inquiries and 200 landlord/tenant complaints a year;
- Department of Inspections, Licensing, and Permits (DILP) has issued more than 2,500 rental housing notice of violations a year; and
- Office of Human Rights and Equity (OHRE) has annually received approximately eight housing



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discrimination complaints concerning issues that span from refusal to rent to lease termination.



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Since 2019, 93 percent of the notice of violations issued by DILP were because of the proactive enforcement by the department's Rental Housing Investigation Unit. In 2024, the County elevated OCP to be a standalone office due to growing caseload that was interrelated with other constituent and enforcement related services handled by the County's OHRE, Department of Community Resources and Services (DCRS), DILP, and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

My LIVE Executive Order (EO) addresses habitability concerns experienced by tenants by expanding and strengthening the County departments and offices that handle landlord-tenant complaints by:

- Empowering tenants and landlords with information as to their rights and requirements under the law;
- Removing language barriers to access resources;
- Expanding resources to those experiencing a housing crisis; and
- Creating efficient complaint processes with alternative ways to resolve disputes.

In Howard County, every dwelling or dwelling unit not occupied solely by the owner or owner's immediate family requires a Rental Housing License; this license is issued by DILP. This EO calls for the County to evaluate increasing the number of inspectors in DILPs' Rental Housing Enforcement Division in Fiscal Year (FY) 2027. It also requires DILP to provide an annual update to its Rental Housing Checklist for landlords and that the checklist be translated in the top five spoken languages in Howard County.

The EO also orders OCP to:

- Evaluate increasing the number of its staff in FY 2027 to further support conciliations between landlords and tenants and to administer an arbitration program to help resolve landlord tenant disputes.
- Increase its [landlord and tenant](#) outreach and education program by:
  - Translating the Landlord Tenant Assistance publication and other related documentation into five additional languages beyond the required translation to English, Spanish, Chinese, and French.
  - Updating the Landlord Tenant Assistance publication with legal resources, rental assistance resources, and utility assistance resources.

Enacting statewide legislation would strengthen Howard County's policies and help ensure that landlords provide decent, safe and healthy rental units for tenants throughout the state.

I urge the Committee's **favorable report on SB0941**.

Respectfully,

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive

# **SB0941 Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties In**

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



## TESTIMONY FOR SB0941

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

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Henson

**Committee:** Judiciary

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0941 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Sadly, there are too many properties in the state where the landlord does not care about keeping the building in good repair, leaving the tenants to live in squalor. This causes serious risks for the tenants – both health and safety risks.

This bill, if enacted, would require the Department of Housing and Community Development to create a process for identifying severe health and safety properties in the state and predatory landlord practices. They are tasked with working with the Attorney General to develop methods for the residents of the properties to refer issues to them. Finally, they are to develop a series of consequences (financial and legal) as well as a timeline for ensuring that repairs and other fixes are made appropriately.

This is an area of housing that needs a lot more oversight and more penalties for the landlords who do this. We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

**Progressive Maryland. FAV. SB941.pdf**

Uploaded by: Erica Puentes

Position: FAV



# PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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**Bill Title:** SB941 - Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan

**Position:** SUPPORT (FAV)

**To:** Judicial Proceedings Committee

**From:** Erica Puentes, on behalf of Progressive Maryland

**Date:** March 9, 2026

Dear Chair Smith and members of the Judicial Proceedings 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 SB941.**

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 Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on SB941.**

**SB941\_FAV\_EconAction.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: FAV



**SB941: Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan**

**Position: Favorable**

March 11, 2026

The Honorable Will Smith, Chair  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
cc: Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee

Chair Smith and Members of the Committee:

Economic Action Maryland Fund urges a favorable report on SB941, 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 SB941.

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](mailto:Marceline@EconAction.org) | Jennifer Bevan-Dangel · [Jennifer@EconAction.org](mailto:Jennifer@EconAction.org)

# **SB0941 Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties In**

Uploaded by: John Ford

Position: FAV

**TESTIMONY FOR SB0941**  
**Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and**  
**Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan**

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Henson

**Committee:** Judiciary

**Position:** **FAVORABLE**

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0941 in collaboration with the Maryland Legislative Coalition, an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members. I am a resident of District 46 and a mom-and-pop landlord with one direct property and interests in two more.

Sadly, there are too many properties in the state where the landlord does not care about keeping the building in good repair, leaving the tenants to live in squalor. This causes serious risks for the tenants – both health and safety risks.

This bill, if enacted, would require the Department of Housing and Community Development to create a process for identifying severe health and safety properties in the state and predatory landlord practices. They are tasked with working with the Attorney General to develop methods for the residents of the properties to refer issues to them. Finally, they are to develop a series of consequences (financial and legal) as well as a timeline for ensuring that repairs and other fixes are made appropriately.

This is an area of housing that needs a lot more oversight and more penalties for the landlords who do this. We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

John Preston Ford  
529 S East Ave  
Baltimore, MD 21224

# **Testimony in support of SB0941 - Severe Health and**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0941\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV

03/13/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#0941- POSITION: FAVORABLE**

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

**TO:** Chair Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Waldstreicher and members of the Judicial Proceedings 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 SB#0941, **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](#).<sup>1</sup>

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 SB#0941.**

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<sup>1</sup> Google AI Search “protecting tenants from Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties”

**SB0941sponsor testimony3.11v2.pdf**

Uploaded by: Senator Shaneka Henson

Position: FAV

SHANEKA HENSON  
Legislative District 30  
Anne Arundel County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children,  
Youth, and Families



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SPONSOR TESTIMONY**

**Senate Bill 0941 – Department of Housing and Community Development  
Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties – Intervention Plan**

Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

For the record, I am Senator Shaneka Henson, representing District 30 in Anne Arundel County and a member of the JPR Committee. It is my privilege to present Senate Bill 0941 – *Department of Housing and Community Development – Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties – Intervention Plan* – and, after hearing the testimony today, to respectfully request a favorable report.

SB0941 requires the Department of Housing and Community Development’s Office of Landlord and Tenant Affairs, in consultation with the Attorney General’s Office, to identify rental properties that have received state funding and now pose *severe health and safety risks*. The Department must develop a responsive action plan and submit its recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly on or before August 31, 2027.

The central purpose of the bill is to establish **clear legal definitions** supporting consistent enforcement. SB0941 provides a statutory definition of a “*severe health and safety risk property*” as a rental property that routinely fails to meet basic health and safety standards. It specifies qualifying conditions such as chronic noncompliance with local housing codes, repeated cycles of violations, persistent hazardous conditions, and ongoing failures to remediate. These definitions create **objective criteria** for agencies and courts, reducing ambiguity and limiting inconsistent application of enforcement tools.

Another strength of SB0941 is that it directs the Office of Landlord and Tenant Affairs—working in collaboration with the Attorney General’s Office—to develop a legally grounded **intervention plan**. This effort ensures that identification and remediation efforts reflect legal expertise, align with existing enforcement authority, and support defensible actions when matters require judicial review.

Importantly, SB0941 does **not** mandate automatic penalties. Instead, it requires a menu of tailored interventions proportionate to the severity and persistence of violations. These

may include financial consequences, corrective action plans with deadlines, mandatory inspections, remediation timelines, and—when necessary—legal actions such as injunctions or court proceedings.

This graduated framework respects due process by tying enforcement measures to documented patterns of noncompliance rather than isolated incidents.

The bill also recognizes the essential role of judicial oversight. By framing injunctive relief and other court-based remedies within a structured intervention plan, SB0941 promotes consistent, appropriate use of legal tools to address negligent or noncompliant landlords while respecting property rights and established legal standards.

The legislation prioritizes **tenant protection**. Potential interventions include tenant escrow, pest eradication plans, structural repairs, and temporary relocation when units are unsafe. These actions are coordinated—rather than ad hoc—ensuring that tenant safety is protected through a fair, legally sound process.

To support transparency and accountability, SB0941 requires the Department to submit its intervention plan and recommended statutory changes by a specific date. The sunset provision ensures the General Assembly has the opportunity to evaluate outcomes before adopting any permanent changes. This careful oversight allows legislators to calibrate future enforcement authority based on real-world results.

The intention of SB0941 is to establish a measured, legally sound approach to addressing severe health and safety failures in rental housing. By defining key terms, strengthening coordinated oversight, promoting proportional remedies, and preserving judicial review, the bill advances fairness, enforceability, and the protection of vulnerable residents.

Joining us today to highlight the importance of this legislation are representatives from Progressive Maryland's Housing Justice Committee, Maryland Legal Aid, and the Public Justice Center.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 941.

**SB0941 - Maryland Legal Aid - FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Zafar Shah

Position: FAV



## Senate Bill 941

### Department of Housing and Community Development – Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties – Intervention Plan

Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
On March 11, 2026

#### Position: FAVORABLE

*Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits its written and oral testimony on SB0941 at the request of bill sponsor Senator Shaneka Henson.*

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 SB941, 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, SB 941 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, SB 941 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

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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, SB 941 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. SB 941 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. SB 941 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 SB 941.**

If you have any questions, please contact:

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

**MMHA - 2026 - SB941- OAG - Interevention Plan.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ashley Clark

Position: UNF



**Bill Title:** Senate Bill 941, Department of Housing and Community Development - Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan

**Committee:** Judicial Proceedings Committee

**Date:** March 11, 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.

Senate Bill 941 (“SB 941”) 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, SB 941 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 SB 941.

Please contact Aaron Greenfield at [agreenfield@mmhaonline.org](mailto:agreenfield@mmhaonline.org) or Ashley Clark at [ashley.clark@mdlobbyist.com](mailto:ashley.clark@mdlobbyist.com) with any questions or concerns.

# **2026\_03\_10 SB 941 DHCD Severe Health Intervention**

Uploaded by: Tiffany Clark

Position: INFO

**CAROLYN A. QUATTROCKI**  
*Chief Deputy Attorney General*

**LEONARD J. HOWIE III**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

**CARRIE J. WILLIAMS**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

**SHARON S. MERRIWEATHER**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

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**PETER V. BERNS**  
*General Counsel*

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*Chief of Staff*

**STATE OF MARYLAND**  
**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

**ANTHONY G. BROWN**  
*Attorney General*

March 11, 2026

**TO:** The Honorable William Smith  
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** Tiffany Clark  
Director, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

**RE:** Senate Bill 941 – Department of Housing and Community Development -  
Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties - Intervention Plan (Letter of  
Information)

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The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) respectfully submits this letter to provide information to the Committee regarding Senate Bill 941 - Department of Housing and Community Development – Severe Health and Safety Risk Properties – Intervention Plan. Senate Bill 941 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

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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