



Bill Title: House Bill 816, Real Property - Residential Leases - Voter Registration

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Date: February 25, 2020

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 210,000 rental housing homes in over 958 apartment communities. Our members house over 538,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA also represents over 250 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

Under House Bill 816, not later than 15 days after the date of occupancy, every landlord must provide a tenant with a state voter registration application for each individual at least 16 years old who is authorized to reside at the residential rental property. A landlord that fails to comply is liable for \$25 in damages for each voter registration application that the landlord failed to provide. House Bill 816 permits a landlord to raise as a defense all reasonable attempts by the landlord to deliver the voter registration applications.

MMHA fully supports voter registration and engagement. However, requiring private industry to undertake a public purpose is counterintuitive. We are in the business of residential housing not voter information and registration. Should we also require other industries that interact with Marylanders to provide a voter registration application? What about car dealerships? Countless Marylanders shop at Target. Should we include retail stores?

The State of Maryland is at the forefront of voter registration efforts. Marylanders are automatically registered to vote when they interact with state agencies like the Motor Vehicle Administration. This is effective and how the voter application process should operate.

For the foregoing reasons, MMHA respectfully requests an **unfavorable report on House Bill 816.**

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