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Committee

Subcommittees

Government Operations
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Public Health and
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House Bill 192

Department of General Services – Energy – Conserving Standards

(Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2020)

Dear Chairman Pendergrass, Chairman McIntosh, and members of the Joint Committee,

It isn't often that we, as legislators, are presented with the opportunity to address a significant problem *and* save money, but that is exactly what House Bill 192 will allow you to do. We can both reduce energy costs while saving up to a billion birds in the U.S. annually that die due to building facades.

The trend of the past several decades has been to incorporate greater amounts of glass/plexiglass into building facades. While architecturally and artistically appealing, the increased uses of transparent glass, particularly in tall buildings and skyscrapers, has threatened to undo energy conservation efforts, costs the State money, and contributes to climate change. They also act as deathtraps as birds, unable to detect the glass, fly into it at high velocities and die. Next to predation by feral cats, this is the second highest cause of U.S. bird deaths.

Because transparent glass/plexiglass is energy inefficient and the approved glass/plexiglass changes measurably increase its energy efficiency, use of the bird safe windows and/or architectural elements increases a buildings energy efficiency measurably. Incorporation of bird-safe designs in construction reduces energy maintenance costs, resulting in net savings to the buildings and facilities budget. This is consistent with the State's mandate under the High Performance Building Act of 2008 that newly constructed state buildings meet or exceed U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver rating criteria or the equivalent.

As a signatory to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, Maryland has committed to protecting, and our agencies are obligated to minimize, to the extent practicable, adverse effects on migratory birds. The substitution of bird-safe glass or plexiglass in facades has been shown to reduce bird strikes on buildings by up to 90%. Birds enhance our quality of life, control insect and other vermin populations, are key players in seed dispersal and pollination, serve as nourishment, and provide comfort, companionship, entertainment, protection and employment. Separate from their ecologic importance, the economic contribution of birding and other avian-related industries and activities to Maryland's Total Industrial Output is calculated by the Maryland Ornithological Society as over \$909 million annually, generating 10,807 full and part-time jobs, and producing \$88.4 million in state and local revenue.

HB192 requires the Maryland Department of General Services to apply "to the extent practicable" bird safe designs or materials in newly constructed, acquired, or substantially altered state buildings. The allowable designs and materials include secondary facades and other collision precluding physical elements such as ultraviolet patterned, matte, opaque, etched, stained, or frosted glass/plexiglass. Incorporation of such architectural elements in the design and planning stage is cost-neutral and will reduce energy consumption substantially, making State buildings more sustainable.

Passing HB192, The Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2020, is win-win. By requiring incorporation of bird-safe standards in the planning, design and construction of new State buildings and significant renovations, we can decrease the number of deadly bird strikes, maintain and even enhance architectural aesthetics, and save taxpayer dollars.

I respectfully request a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terri L. Hill, M.D.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Terri L. Hill, M.D.