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February 19, 2021

Delegate Kumar P. Barve, Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Rm 251
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **HB 253 – Baltimore County - Nuisance Actions - Community Association Support With Amendments**

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee:

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) is dedicated to addressing the social determinants of health and the advancement of racial and health equity through the creation of healthy, safe and energy efficient homes. By delivering a standard of excellence in our work, GHHI aims to eradicate the negative health impacts of unhealthy housing and unjust policies for children, seniors, and families to ensure better health, economic and social outcomes in low-income communities and communities of color. We achieve healthy homes through the alignment of resources to eliminate health hazards and upgrade houses with improved energy efficiency measures. Housing quality and conditions significantly impact occupant health and well-being. Low-income communities and communities of color including those found in Baltimore County often contain substandard housing with environmental health hazards such as lead paint that contribute to widespread health, economic and social inequities.

In 2019, there were 1,526 children with elevated blood levels (EBLs) of 5 µg/dl or higher in Maryland. 179 children in Baltimore County were diagnosed with elevated blood lead levels, the third highest county in the state for lead poisoning. Lead poisoning from lead in paint, lead in water, and contaminated soil contributes to learning disabilities, loss of IQ, speech development problems, attention deficit disorder, violent, aggressive behavior and poor school performance. Lead poisoning is irreversible and has a significant impact on societal costs including thousands of school age children. Millions of dollars are spent on special education and juvenile justice costs in Maryland to combat the effects of lead poisoning, and thousands of children enter our public-school systems, disproportionately in black and brown communities, with impediments to their development, unable to achieve academically at the rate of their classmates. Children poisoned by lead are 7 times more likely to drop out of school and 6 times more likely to end up in the criminal justice system than the population as a whole.

We support HB253's objective of expanding which community associations can pursue public nuisance actions but request that any language in the Bill that could curtail a rental property owner's obligations to meet the Maryland Risk Reduction standards be struck or amended.

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We are writing in **SUPPORT of HB 253 with an additional Amendment** to strike line 21 on page 4 of HB253 to remove “A condition relating to lead paint;” This provision prevents a community association from being able to pursue an action to remediate a public nuisance in which the alleged nuisance consists of lead-based paint related hazards. Chipping paint and structural defects containing lead paint may cause immediate hazards to community members from exposure to lead paint chips and lead dust. Community associations should have all legal mechanisms and resources at their disposal to address hazardous properties in their community that pose a hazard and public nuisance to the occupants of the property containing a lead paint hazards or other lead hazards, any occupants of an adjoining property and any members residing in the community where the property is located.

The ultimate tragedy of childhood lead poisoning is that it is an entirely preventable disease. Every dollar invested in lead hazard remediation prevention in homes results in health, educational, and other savings of at least \$17-\$221 in return. Thank you for your consideration of this Bill and our proposed amendments and we urge a favorable report from the committee on HB253.

Respectfully Yours,



Ruth Ann Norton
President and CEO