



Bill Title: House Bill 1069, Maryland Bedbug Detection and Treatment Act

Committee: Environment and Transportation Committee

Date: March 1, 2022

Position: Favorable with Amendments

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 including towing companies.

This bill requires a tenant to promptly notify the landlord if the tenant knows or reasonably suspects the tenant's dwelling unit contains bedbugs. If necessary, the landlord is required to treat the dwelling unit and contiguous units. The tenant is required to provide access to and treatment of the dwelling unit. The bill prohibits a landlord from offering a dwelling unit the landlord knows or reasonably suspects to contain bedbugs.

While bedbugs do not transmit disease, infestations have been known to cause consternation among those affected. Without the cooperation of residents, bedbug infestations can result in significant financial and administrative burdens for apartment owners, operators, and their staffs, causing property loss, expense, and inconvenience. Owners and managers of rental housing face a number of challenges associated with addressing bedbug infestations, including increased operational costs and resident non-compliance with inspection and treatment protocols. Policymakers should consider that contamination may spread to neighboring units if residents fail to comply. While pest management professionals offer cost-effective treatment methods, such as heat treatments, these costs can add up and put an unexpected strain on an owner or management firm's operating budget, particularly small businesses.

The central challenge housing providers have in addressing bedbugs is ensuring that the resident has timely prepared the property and their belongings. Any delay caused by the resident creates added cost and property challenges. MMHA appreciates that House Bill 1069 holds the tenant accountable for costs if they fail to comply with the inspection or treatment of the unit (see page 4, lines 26-30).

Bedbugs are introduced to apartments by residents. As such, legislation addressing bedbug eradication in rental units must properly balance responsibility for preventive action and eradication costs between residents and owners. When the resident fails to meet their obligation,



the resident should have financial responsibility as provided in this legislation.

MMHA offers the following amendments:

1. Business Days: Once a tenant promptly notifies the landlord of that the dwelling may have bedbugs, we ask that the bill provide 4 business days to obtain an inspection by a commercial pest control agent. So, on page 2, in line 27, after “4” insert “BUSINESS”
2. Trained Staff: Some housing providers employ trained staff to inspect a dwelling unit for bedbugs. We ask that a landlord have the ability to inspect the premises. On page 2, in line 30, after “AGENT” insert “OR LANDLORD.”
3. Reasonably Suspects: MMHA is unclear how a housing provider would “reasonably suspect” that a unit has bedbugs unless a resident provides some form of notice. On page 5, in line 8, strike “OR REASONABLY SUSPECTS”.
4. Prospective Tenant: Under the bill, on request by a prospective tenant, a housing provider must disclose if the unit contained bedbugs within the previous 8 months and whether the unit offered was inspected for and found to be free of bedbugs. We would strike this language on page 5, lines 9-15.
5. Landlord Liability: This bill provides that the housing provider is already responsible for “all costs associated with an inspection for and the treatment of the presence of bedbugs.” See page 3, lines 21-23. MMHA suggests on page 5, strike lines 17-18.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report with amendments on House Bill 1069.

Aaron J. Greenfield, MMHA Director of Government Affairs, 410.446.1992