



STATE OF MARYLAND

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March 14, 2023

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
Maryland General Assembly
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB0907– Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarm-Requirements
(Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)

Dear Senator Feldman and Senator Kagan:

I am writing you today regarding SB 0970 Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms – Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act). This legislation was introduced following the devastating fire last month at a Silver Spring high-rise apartment complex that displaced over 400 residents, led to the hospitalization of 20 people, including firefighters and caused the tragic death of 25-year-old Melanie Diaz and her two dogs.

Fire dynamics have greatly changed over the last several years. Fires these days are much faster, hotter and produce more smoke that contains harmful chemicals that will kill you in a short amount of time. Having a fire of this nature in one of these non-protected high-rise residential structures impacts all of the residents which was seen last month in Silver Spring, Chicago, and last year in the Bronx New York where 17 people were killed to include eight children.

It is time to protect these residents and our firefighters in these dangerous buildings. This can be accomplished by installing automatic fire sprinklers. Just one sprinkler head last month would have controlled the fire or completely extinguished it prior to the arrival of the fire department. We would have not had any deaths or injuries or seen the number of displacements if that one sprinkler head had been in place.

The opposition to this bill will tell you that the cost to install these systems cannot be accomplished by these apartment and condominium associations. I will tell you that there are bills currently in congress that will provide funding for the installation of sprinklers in these occupancies. Research has shown that buildings with fire sprinkler systems are less expensive to own and manage than buildings without them.

This legislation has the full support of the Montgomery County Executive and County Council. The Maryland Fire Service also supports it, as this bill will save lives in these high-rise residential structures. Fire sprinkler systems deliver an initial level of safety for people and the building, allowing time for safe evacuation and limiting structural damage until the fire department arrives. I will leave you with this one last comment: **During a fire today, you have the least amount of time to safely exit your home than at any other time in history.**

Please think about this, give SB 0970 a favorable vote, and move it along in the process so we can start to save lives in these dangerous structures. Thank you for your time and attention should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Brian S. Geraci,
State Fire Marshal