

Support for HB Bills 266, 273, 279, 280, and 281 with Recommendations for Comprehensive Education

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

My name is LaShauna Tillmon, and as a Community Association Manager operating in Maryland, I represent the interests of a national management company that oversees 160 associations within the state of Maryland. I am here to express my support for House Bills 266, 273, 279, 280, and 281, which all stand to significantly impact the community association management industry.

While I endorse the proposed legislation, I must emphasize that my support is conditional. I advocate for the inclusion of mandatory training and certification for Board members as an integral part of these bills. It is well understood in our industry that management agents act under the direction of association boards. However, it is also evident that while some board members are well-equipped to support their communities, a substantial number lack a comprehensive understanding of their fiduciary duties to the community at large.

Imagine the challenges of being an expert in the field, yet receiving directives from individuals not fully versed in the nuances of the industry. As Community Association Managers, we are tasked with making operational recommendations, offering guidance and execution of directive, which often leads to difficult, yet necessary conversations. The complexities of operational costs, adhering to the HOA and Condo Act, and reserve funding are areas where the lack of board member education can negatively impact decision-making.

The oversight detailed in these bills only address one side of the industry. Numerous cases presented before the commission or the Attorney General's office could potentially be mitigated through a foundational understanding of the industry by board members. By incorporating board education and certification into these bills, we can ensure that the communities we serve not only thrive but also contribute to the enhancement of property values, the quality of life for community members, and the prosperity of Prince George's county.

Furthermore, there are associations that are self-managed and may not benefit from the support of professional management, which can potentially result in even less oversight. While we can all agree that oversight is necessary, it's also clear that the challenges we face span both sides of the management spectrum. The role of both managers and board members is often thankless, and many managers find themselves torn between maintaining client relationships and upholding their integrity as they witness boards devolving into problematic entities. Such stress contributes to a high industry turnover rate, with the average career span of a manager being approximately 3-5 years, leading to frequent transitions within associations.

There is a concern that mandatory certification for board members may deter volunteers, just as licensing requirements could impact manager retention. However, positive change requires action, and we cannot let apprehension of what may happen prevent progress. As I would like to see mandates for management companies, such as transition of records in a timely manner, operational integrity and many other items, the common denominator of acceptance still falls on the knowledge of the board. There are some in this industry that have benefitted from this lack of education, which leads to top heavy agreements and the ability to operate above-board.

In addition to board and manager education, I also propose that realtors receive training on the intricacies of HOAs and condominiums. Prospective buyers should be informed that purchasing within an HOA is not only about acquiring property but also about investing in the community.

In conclusion, I urge us to unite and place education at the forefront to foster the growth and improvement of our industry.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to share my perspective.

Respectfully,

LaShauna
Community Association Manager