



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS, LICENSES AND PERMITS

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To: Lonnie Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer
Department of County Administration

From: Robert J. Frances, P.E., Director
Department of Inspections, Licenses, & Permits

RE: Testimony for Legislation Requiring Registration of Multi-Family Residential Condominium Associations

I am requesting this legislation so that owners and responsible agents for multi-family residential condominium associations will be required to provide accurate and up to date contact information for their properties. This information is needed to provide proper legal notice to conduct inspections and, if necessary, cite violations of the Howard County Property Maintenance Code for Rental Housing, the Fire Code and the Building Code.

Title 3.700 of the County Code establishes the Property Maintenance Code for Rental Housing. The scope of that document includes the common areas of multi-family dwellings, such as apartment buildings. An entire apartment building and all its dwelling units can be owned by a single entity or each unit can be owned by an individual with the common space of the structure owned "condominium" style. Most of what we inspect relates to fire and life safety systems (e.g. sprinkler systems, fire alarm systems, means of egress, emergency lighting, etc.) and are the responsibility of the condo association rather than an individual dwelling unit owner. When inspections need to be scheduled, and when violations needing attention are identified, we need up to date, accurate contact information to have these critical issues addressed.

About six years ago it was determined that since condos are not "rental" properties, Title 14.900 of the County Code which addresses licensing requirements for rental housing, was not applicable. Because of this we could not compel the homeowners associations of a condominium building to apply for a rental housing license. The intent of this legislation is to create a new Subsection 14.1100 of the County Code to require a rental housing license-like registration for the common areas of multi-family residential condominiums. Although we could establish a fee for this registration, we are not proposing any such fee during this first year.

T:/Director/Condo Common Area Registration Testimony 9-2009.rjf