



BALTIMORE CITY
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
c/o Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

From: Michael Braverman, Housing Commissioner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Braverman", is written over the printed name.

Date: November 6, 2019

Re: **City Council Bill 19-0148R Informational Hearing - Mold in Housing**

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Resolution 19-0148R for the purpose of inviting the Commissioner of the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Executive Director of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, the Health Commissioner, and the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health or his designee to appear before the City Council to discuss the potential dangers of mold in housing.

DHCD is in support of the Council's efforts to learn about agency functions related to mold in housing and its potential health impacts.

DHCD's Division of Homeownership & Housing Preservation offers several programs to assist owners of eligible owner-occupied properties with repairs to address many health and safety issues. DHCD recognizes the importance of creating healthy homes that curb environmental hazards, lower asthma triggers, limit trips to the emergency room, and reduce the number of school and work days missed. Interior environmental quality is an important component of achieving healthy homes, and interior mold spores can wreak havoc on a family's health and home. One program, Weatherization, not only improves energy efficiency and lowers utility bills but makes homes safer by addressing health and safety issues in the home such as mold and asbestos. These interventions are funded by dedicated health and safety funds that are included in weatherization grant funding from State and Federal sources.

The Division's Lead Hazard Reduction Program (LHRP) and Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) also assist residents in addressing mold in their home. LHRP can address mold in homes receiving lead hazard reduction interventions by utilizing HUD Healthy Homes dollars. This is a limited amount of funding that is received in conjunction with the City's Lead Hazard Reduction grant from HUD. These grant funded health and safety, and healthy homes dollars are often not enough to fully cover all the health and safety issues we observe in the homes receiving weatherization and lead hazard reduction services and, in some instances, mold will not be able to be addressed due to lack of available funds.

ORS offers loans and grants to perform repairs on properties, these funds can be used to address mold and other internal environmental issues, but often the mold is being caused by another underlying issue such as a roof leak, plumbing leak or improper ventilation. Funds will be used to address the underlying issue, and if funds are available, will also be used for mold testing and remediation. One of the more frequent causes of mold in Baltimore row homes can be attributed to the condition of the roof, poor roofing conditions can often lead to mold growth. Basement ground water infiltration, and plumbing leaks are another leading cause of mold growth in housing. Addressing these root causes can reduce the instances of the presence of mold in homes and promote healthy, and sustainable housing. The Division's LIGHT Intake and Assessment Unit manages a single application process for all of DHCD's available programs and can provide an application for residents seeking assistance.

DHCD's Division of Housing Code Enforcement & Emergency Operations strives to maintain safe and attractive neighborhoods throughout the city, DHCD's Code Enforcement Division Inspectors enforce the city's Building, Fire and related codes through the issuance of notices and citations. Inspectors responding to complaints of mold will inspect for leaks or lack of ventilation that may be causing the condition in addition to the sanitation issue. Inspectors do not test for mold because of the inherent complexity due to many varying types of mold and lack of consensus around industry standards but do suggest property owners hire a private mold investigator to determine the type and cause of mold.

DHCD **supports** City Council Bill 19-0148R and the Council's efforts to learn more about mold in housing and its potential health impacts.

MB:sm

cc: Mr. Nicholas Blendy, *Mayor's Office of Government Relations*