



MEMORANDUM

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

From: Alice Kennedy, Acting Housing Commissioner

Date: January 24, 2022

Re: City Council Resolution 21-0079R - Informational Hearing - Mold in Housing

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Resolution 21-0079R 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 City agencies' current strategies to address mold in owner-occupied and rental housing, remedies tenants and homeowners in our community have when they are exposed to indoor mold, and ways regulatory efforts can be enhanced.

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 physical housing structure. DHCD's Division of Homeownership & Housing Preservation offers programs to assist owners of eligible owner-occupied properties with repairs which may address underlying issues causing mold. The Weatherization Assistance Program, 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 the root causes of mold in their home. ORS provides loans and grants as funding allows, to pay for the removal and replacement of building materials that display mold and, in some cases, can provide testing. 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

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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.

Loans and grants to perform repairs on properties can be used to address mold and other internal environmental issues, but often the mold is being caused by another underlying root cause such as a roof leak or plumbing leak, or improper ventilation. Funds can be used to address the underlying issue, and if funds are available, will also be used for mold testing and remediation. The Achilles heel of a Baltimore row home is the roof, and 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 the programs and can provide applications 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 housing, zoning, building and related codes through the issuance of notices and citations. Inspectors will often observe the appearance of mold during site visits and issue a notice to the property owner. Housing Code Enforcement Inspectors do not test the mold, they advise the property owner to hire a private mold investigator to determine the type and cause of mold.

DHCD supports City Council Resolution 21-0079R.

AK:sm



cc: Ms. Themelis, Nina, *Mayor's Office of Government Relations*