



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

Date: March 4, 2019

Re: **City Council Bill 19-0344, License of Rental Dwelling**

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Bill 19-0344, for the purpose of requiring the Housing Commissioner to provide certain alternative methods for applying for a new or renewal dwelling license; amending the requirements for renewal license inspection to exempt a dwelling unit in a 1- or 2-family dwelling under certain conditions; and providing for a special effective date.

If enacted, this bill will amend sections of the newly implemented code pertaining to the licensing of 1- or 2-family rental dwelling units in the City. It would require DHCD to accept applications in-person or by the mail for applicants who might have difficulties using the current online application.

Approximately about 90% of all rental licenses issued to property owners were processed using the on-line application. The remaining 10% of licenses were processed by mail or in person. DHCD has provided support to applicants that have experienced difficulties with using the on-line system, and is supportive of the proposed amended language.

Passage of this bill would also require DHCD to develop a process that would allow 1- or 2-family dwelling units to be licensed without needing a third party home inspection. The new process would allow a signed statement from the current tenant acknowledging that the tenant voluntarily consents to the rental license renewal, subject to compliance with all other applicable requirements, but without the need for the otherwise required third party home inspection. The tenant still has the right to log a 311 complaint requesting a City inspector visit the property for code enforcement issues that are not addressed by the landlord in a timely manner.

DHCD recognizes that allowing tenants to waive the rental inspection requirement may inadvertently create an opportunity for unlawful coercion and manipulation of tenants, which could result in their residing in sub-standard or unsafe conditions. If the Bill passes as written, DHCD looks forward to working with stakeholders to develop a process strictly defining and enforcing the criteria by which landlords and tenants will be required to verify that the decision to waive the inspection was made appropriately, voluntarily and with the informed consent of both parties. In addition, the Bill would

allow for this option only upon renewal of a license. Renewals for rental licenses to be obtained by landlords that own 1- and 2-family dwelling units will not begin to be issued until January of 2021. Thus, if the Bill passes there would be an extended period of time to develop such a process.

DHCD does not take a position on the Bill.

MB:td

cc: Mr. Jeffrey Amoros, *Mayor's Office of Government Relations*