

# Community Enforcement of Health & Safety Rental Housing Laws

Support HB\_\_\_(Delegate Price), SB43(Senator Favola)

## The Problem:

**There are apartment complexes in Virginia in such deplorable condition it's unsafe to live there.**

- Usually, tenants living in these deplorable conditions lack the means to enforce their rights to require their landlords to make necessary repairs. They don't have access to attorneys, and they lack funds to pay their rent into court, especially if the unsafe or unhealthy conditions force them to move into a hotel or motel.
- Current law limits the actions building code officials can take to fining the landlord and/or condemning the property, neither of which improve the safety of the community or protect the health of the residents.
- Current law disincentivizes action by local officials because they know that action may lead to condemnation, eviction and increased homelessness.

## HB\_\_\_/SB43's Solution:

HB/SB empowers cities, counties, and towns to file suit against slumlords to force compliance with the health and safety standards of the Virginia Residential Landlord Tenant Act. This will give localities the tool they need to protect their residents from unsafe living conditions and improve the health and safety of their community. Rather than resorting to condemning structures that violate the State Building Maintenance Code and thus displacing tenants, **localities can seek a resolution that protects the interests of its residents, such as having a judge order that landlords make repairs and abate all or part of their rent.**

By granting localities the authority to enforce the health and safety provisions of the VRLTA, HB/SB43 will help local officials make their communities healthier, protect the rights of tenants, promote conciliation between tenants and landlords through state intervention, and increase landlord compliance with VRLTA provisions.

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