

Melanie Nicholle Diaz Fire Safety Act (HB 823)

On Saturday, February 18th, 2023, a deadly fire broke out in one of the buildings at the Arrive Apartment complex in Silver Spring. The fire broke out in an apartment on the seventh floor of one of the 15-story buildings. Over 100 firefighters had to be called to the scene. Several residents were trapped in their apartments and had to be rescued from their balconies. Multiple people were hospitalized because of injuries sustained in the fire. 400 people were displaced. Melanie Diaz, only 25 years old and a beloved community member, died in the fire.¹

This bill is designed to improve fire safety in high rise residential rental buildings, like the Arrive Apartment, including the following:

- Requiring smoke detection in public corridors that is in line with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.
- Requiring fire safety instruction for tenants every 6 months and when tenants change or move in. This instruction should include identification of the occupant notification system and evacuation routes.
- Requiring emergency lights in all common egresses based on codes and regulations of NFPA.
- Ensuring hard of hearing tenants have visual alarms, for which landlords cannot charge them.
- Requiring signage near the entrances indicating a building does not have sprinklers.
- Requiring notice in the lease agreement for new tenants that the building does not have sprinklers.

The bill requires state agencies to look for funding to assist in sprinkler installation and enables counties to create a property tax credit to support sprinkler installation.

Finally, the bill creates a task force to develop best practices for installation of fire alarm and automatic fire sprinkler systems in high rise buildings built prior to 1974. The requirement to install sprinklers in high rise buildings took effect in 1974, so these buildings have not been required to have sprinklers. This task force will consist of fire safety experts, architects, engineers, and representatives of rental buildings and condominiums. Together they will examine costs, design, installation, maintenance, and other factors to determine potential alternative standards for retrofits.

For more information please contact:

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<https://wjla.com/news/local/deadly-fire-silver-spring-apartment-arrive-melanie-diaz-cause-source-accident-accidental-victim-family-montgomery-county-maryland-moco-georgia-avenue-deadly-fatal-sprinkler-system>