



FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

Denver, CO



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OurFrontPorchCO.org

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RE: HB23-1254, Habitability of Residential Premises

I am the founder and COO of Our Front Porch, a nonprofit that provides long-term recovery support to people displaced by home and apartment fires in the Denver Metro Area. The majority of our clients are renters and we spend a fair amount of time helping them deal with their landlords after a fire: accessing their personal property, terminating leases, and understanding asbestos abatement. While the House Bill 23-1254 is a welcome improvement to the warrant of habitability provisions to provide more protections for renters, I wanted to make you aware of some issues that are not being considered.

Our Front Porch supported Marshall Fire survivors last year, but most of our clients are displaced from home and apartment fires which occur daily. Home fires affect more people every year than all other major disasters. While they don't make the news very often, home fire survivors are just as dependent on Colorado Statutes as survivors of federally declared disasters.

While not specifically mentioned in the bill, asbestos contamination is a major issue after a fire in buildings built pre-1980s. In larger scale apartment fires, we have seen property management do initial asbestos testing and then deem the entire building to be a major spill and use that as a way to condemn the building, use insurance money to renovate it, and increase the rents. The result is displacement of an entire community even when most of the units were not directly impacted by the fire. The missing piece is requiring landlords and property management to delineate the asbestos contamination, so only the truly contaminated units are impacted and people aren't needlessly made homeless.

I have also seen landlords and property management use asbestos contamination as a way to lock tenants out of their homes and hold their personal property hostage until they sign a waiver releasing

them of all their rights, or worse just refuse to communicate with the tenant. In one extreme example, a property management company was in the news for evicting an entire apartment building so they could dispose of people's belongings instead of paying to delineate the asbestos contamination. These were long-term and devastating consequences for families who were forced to find a new home in a challenging housing market.

In addition, there currently are no regulatory standards for evaluating homes from smoke and other products of combustion (soot, ash, char, etc.), so there will be some challenges from that perspective. I do know of an effort to create best practices, so I would encourage the committee to consider that approach. It is also essential to have baseline testing done immediately after the event so that post-cleaning testing can be compared to the baseline in order to determine the success of the cleaning efforts. So the timeline of initial testing is also relevant.

I appreciate this House Bill and the efforts to protect renters in a challenging housing market and ultimately keeping more Coloradoans in safe and secure housing.

Thank you for your time,



Heather Korth, COO

Our Front Porch

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