Bill 43-26, Fire Safety – Smoke Escape Hoods in Multifamily Residential Rental Buildings
Montgomery County Council
October 6, 2026
Oppose

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (MCCC), the voice of business in Montgomery County, opposes Bill 43-26, *Fire Safety – Smoke Escape Hoods in Multifamily Residential Rental Buildings*. Bill 43-26 would require owners of multifamily residential rental buildings to provide smoke escape hoods for occupants to use during fire emergencies and establish requirements related to the notification, inspection, maintenance, and replacement of those devices.

The Chamber does not oppose in any way the purpose of this legislation, which is to reduce the risk of injury or death resulting from exposure to smoke and toxic fire gases. We appreciate the intent the sponsors have taken in addressing the important issue of fire safety in multifamily residential buildings.

However, MCCC has concerns regarding the bill's requirement that multifamily residential property owners purchase, maintain, store, and replace smoke escape hoods for residents. We believe this issue warrants further study, including consideration of alternative approaches that may achieve the same public safety objectives more effectively and efficiently.

Specifically, it may be more beneficial to ensure that Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service personnel are equipped with smoke escape hoods and trained to deploy them during emergency situations, rather than requiring multifamily property owners to maintain these devices onsite. Such an approach could provide more consistent oversight, maintenance, and deployment of the equipment while ensuring it is used under the direction of trained first responders.

It remains unclear whether residents would be better served by having access to smoke escape hoods during an emergency or by receiving and using hoods provided by firefighters as part of a coordinated rescue effort. Additionally, many other high-rise and large-occupancy buildings would not be subject to the proposed requirement as currently drafted, raising questions about the consistency, equity, and overall effectiveness of the policy.

For these reasons, the Chamber respectfully opposes Bill 43-26 as written and encourages the Council to further evaluate this issue and consider alternative solutions, including equipping first responders with smoke escape hoods, before imposing new mandates on multifamily property owners.

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (MCCC), established in 1959, is an independent non-profit membership organization. MCCC advocates on behalf of our members for growth in business opportunities, strategic investment in infrastructure, and balanced tax reform to advance Metro Maryland as a regional, national, and global location for business success.

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