April 6, 2022

Councilmember Mark Squilla

City Hall, Room 332

Philadelphia, PA 19107-3290

RE: Bill 220299

Dear Councilmember Squilla,

My name is [insert name] and I am the [title] at [propert(y/ies) name] located at [address(es)] here in Philadelphia, PA. I am writing to you today in opposition of Bill 220299, requiring the installation of Automatic Sprinkler systems in existing high-rise buildings, which was introduced at Philadelphia’s City Council Session on March 31, 2022.

I’d like to begin this letter by stressing that our first and foremost commitment is keeping our residents, staff, and our community safe. Apartments are built to codes that contain fires when they do start, required fire evacuation and safety plans ensure residents can escape during fires, and annual fire inspections identify and correct deficiencies to maintain a safe living environment.

According to a 2016 report by the National Fire Protection Association, most high-rise building fires begin on floors no higher than the sixth story, and fires in high-rise buildings are less likely to spread beyond the room and floor of origin, compared to fires in shorter buildings. This is due to older high-rise buildings being constructed with concrete and steel, along with firewalls that prevent the spread of any fire to other units or floors, and the addition of millions of dollars of safety enhancements such as smoke lobbies, elevator recall systems, and backup lighting in stairwells.

While installing a sprinkler system in a new construction represents one percent of the total building cost, retrofitting an existing building is a significant cost and logistical burden. Based on National Fire Sprinkler Association estimates, **retrofitting a 400,000 sq. ft. high-rise building runs anywhere between $800,000 to $4 million**, roughly **$12,700** **per unit.**

This high cost is due to the labor intensive and complex installation, which involves tearing out ceilings, running new sprinkler lines with necessary connections, and relocating light fixtures and ductwork. Major building systems would need alteration, including electrical, heating, plumbing, ventilation, and air conditioning, adding to the cost and duration of the installation process. This would surely displace residents from their homes for an unknown period of time and requires additional planning for precautionary measures to protect personal property, carpets, and walls.

This proposal also comes at a time when landlords and tenants are still struggling to get back on their feet following the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both parties are currently navigating through the new Eviction Diversion program and working on payment plans to keep residents in their homes, as rental assistance funds have run completely dry here in Philadelphia.

We would urge you to **hold this legislation** to allow a financial impact study to be done, that we know will demonstrate the costs on owners as well as this legislation’s impact on affordable units across the city of Philadelphia.

We would the opportunity to speak with you about this legislation as we all work to keeping the residents of Philadelphia safe. We can be reached through Andre Del Valle, Senior Director of Government Affairs at the Pennsylvania Apartment Association at ADelValle@paahq.com.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

 Sincerely,

 [Signature]

 Name

 Title

 Company