



PRESS RELEASE

Attorney General Frosh Sues Westminster Management, LLC and 25 Property Owners for Illegal and Harmful Rental Practices *Consumer Protection Division Files Charges Alleging Illegal Fees, Failure to Properly Maintain Rentals, Improper Security Deposit Practices, and Failure to Maintain Required Licenses*

BALTIMORE, MD (October 23, 2019) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today announced that his Consumer Protection Division has filed charges against Westminster Management, LLC, a New Jersey-based corporation, and the 25 companies that own or previously owned 17 residential communities managed by Westminster Management in Maryland. The properties in question contained nearly 9,000 rental units across Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Prince George’s County, and the case brought by the Attorney General seeks redress for conduct to which the charges allege tens of thousands of current and former residents of the communities were subjected.

According to the [Statement of Charges](#), Westminster Management and the rental property owners misrepresented the quality of the rental units and the level of maintenance that they would provide, and they routinely failed to address hazardous conditions in the properties, including rodent and vermin infestations, water leaks, and mold growth, forcing tenants to vacate their homes or live in unsanitary conditions.

The Division also alleges that Westminster Management and the owners have demanded, collected, and retained hundreds of thousands of dollars in illegitimate fees from prospective and actual tenants, including charging application fees that exceeded the amounts permitted under Maryland law. Under Maryland’s Application Fee Law, landlords can only charge \$25 or their actual costs to process the application. The Division alleges that Westminster Management and the owners did not incur costs of more than \$25 to process tenant applications, but routinely charged application fees in excess of \$25. In addition, the Division claims that when Westminster Management and the owners filed eviction actions against tenants who were late paying their rent, they frequently charged additional fees that they never incurred, as well as fees that they were not entitled to collect under Maryland’s eviction laws.

The Division is also charging Westminster Management and the owners with repeatedly violating Maryland’s Security Deposit Law, which allows landlords to collect security deposits from their tenants, but requires the deposits to be returned to the tenant, along with an accounting of any amounts deducted for lost rent, damages due to breach of lease, and damages to the rental property in excess of ordinary wear and tear. According to the Division’s charges, Westminster Management and the owners routinely withheld damages from tenants’ security deposits that were not caused by the tenants and constituted ordinary wear and tear, such as worn carpeting.

Finally, the Division’s charges allege that Westminster Management engaged in illegal debt collection practices, as it did not maintain a license to collect debt, and that the owners of two Baltimore City

properties, Dutch Village Apartments and Pleasantview Apartments, failed to maintain the multi-family dwelling licenses required to legally rent apartments to consumers.

“We allege that the property owners and their property management company violated numerous consumer protection laws, which harmed thousands of Maryland consumers,” said Attorney General Frosh. “We’re charging that Westminster and the rental property owners in this case took advantage of consumers, primarily low- and middle-income families, collecting fees and other unlawful costs from them and often failing to make the repairs needed to maintain suitable environments for their tenants.”

The properties at issue are Carriage Hill Apartments, Carroll Park Apartments, Charlesmont Apartment Homes, the Commons at White Marsh Apartments, Cove Village Apartments, Dutch Village Apartments, Essex Park Apartments and Townhomes, Fontana Village Apartments, Gwynn Oaks Landing Apartments, Hamilton Manor Apartments, Harbor Point Estates, Highland Village Townhomes, Morningside Park Townhomes, Pleasantview Apartments, Princeton Estates Apartment Homes, Riverview Townhomes, and Whispering Woods Apartments.

The Respondents named in the Attorney General’s charges are Westminster Management, LLC; Carriage Hill Investment Limited Partnership; Carroll Park Holdings LLC; Commons at Whitemarsh I, II, V, LLC, Commons at Whitemarsh III, LLC; Commons at Whitemarsh IVA, LLC; Commons at Whitemarsh IVB, LLC; Dutch Village, LLC; Essex Park Holdings LLC; Fontana, LLC; Hamilton Manor Apartments, LLC; Harbor Point Estates I, II, IV, LLC; Harbor Point Estates III, LLC; Highland #179, LLC; Highland #241, LLLP; Highland #689, LLC; Morningside Park Holdings LLC; Pleasantview, LLC; Princeton Estates Limited Partnership; Riverview Apartments, LLC; RP Cove Village, LLC; SRH Charlesmont, LLC; SRH Fox Haven, LLC; SRH Woodmoor, LLC; Whispering Woods #250, LLC; and Whispering Woods #299 Limited Partnership.

The Division is seeking an injunction requiring Westminster and the property owners to stop charging illegal fees, maintain the required licenses, to cease and desist engaging in unfair and deceptive practices, and to provide the safe and sanitary properties that they promise. The charges also seek the payment of restitution and penalties for violations of Maryland’s Consumer Protection Act. The Division has requested that a hearing on its Statement of Charges begin on January 21, 2020.

For more information, affected consumers may call the Consumer Protection hotline at (410) 528-8662 or toll free at (888) 743-0023.