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**FOR RELEASE:**

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## **QUIGLEY/SPENCER/SMITH BILL REQUIRING PROPER BEDBUG EXTERMINATION CLEARS COMMITTEE HURDLE**

*Would Make Landlords Legally, Financially Responsible for Ending Infestations;  
Measure Stems From July Outbreak of Bedbugs in Hudson County Apartment Complexes*

(TRENTON) – Legislation Assembly members Joan M. Quigley, L. Grace Spencer, and L. Harvey Smith sponsored to hold landlords responsible for keeping multi-unit apartment complexes free of bedbug infestations was released today by an Assembly committee.

The sponsors crafted the legislation after news reports detailed severe outbreaks of bedbugs in apartment complexes across Hudson County. In these instances, the tenants, some of whom had nothing to do with the initial infestation, were being charged for extermination.

“It is disgusting to think that there are places in New Jersey where renters are being forced to cohabitate with vermin, simply because they cannot afford a proper extermination,” said Quigley (D-Hudson). “Tenants should not have to pay extra simply to live in a clean and safe environment.”

Originally thought to be eradicated in the U.S., reports of bedbug infestations have increased by almost 500 percent in the last decade, due in large part to increased foreign travel. Able to live for up to 18 months without food, bedbugs are uniquely hard to dispose of without professional extermination. These exterminations can require several treatments, each of which can carry a price tag of more than \$300.

“Bedbugs are hardy pests and can quickly infest an entire apartment building,” said Spencer (D-Essex). “Because piecemeal extermination is virtually impossible, it only makes sense that the responsibility for removing an infestation be given to landlords.”

The legislation (A-3203) would make building owners entirely responsible for maintaining dwellings that are free of bedbug infestations. Under the bill, if and when a bedbug outbreak occurs, landlords would be required to exterminate the pests at their own expense.

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Landlords who do not take action when an infestation is reported would face fines of \$300 per infested apartment and \$1,000 per infested common area. Moreover, local boards of health would be empowered to conduct exterminations and bill unresponsive landlords.

The measure also would require annual inspections of all multi-unit dwellings in the state for bedbug infestations and would require the state Department of Health and Senior Services to create and distribute an informational pamphlet to educate the public about bedbugs.

“Making sure that renters are able to live pest free is only one part of the equation,” said Smith (D-Hudson). “We also must work to educate the public about bedbugs to prevent future infestations from reaching epidemic proportions.”

The Assembly Housing and Local Government Committee released the measure 5- 0 with one abstention. It now heads to the Assembly Speaker, who decides if and when to post it for a floor vote.

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