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QUIGLEY/SPENCER/SMITH/TUCKER/CRUZ-PEREZ BILL **REQUIRING PROPER BEDBUG EXTERMINATION CLEARS ASSEMBLY**

Measure Stems From July Outbreak of Bedbugs in Hudson County Apartment Complexes

(TRENTON) – The Assembly today approved legislation members Joan M. Quigley, L. Grace Spencer, L. Harvey Smith, Cleopatra Tucker and Nilsa Cruz-Perez sponsored to provide additional tools for landlords and tenants to address bedbug infestations.

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

“Renters should not have to live silently with bedbug infestations,” said Quigley (D-Hudson). “Tenants who want to live in a clean and safe environment need the piece of mind that their landlord will work with them to ensure the sanctity of their home.”

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.

“Bedbugs are hardy pests and if not reported quickly to a landlord can infest an entire building,” said Spencer (D-Essex). “Because piecemeal extermination is virtually impossible, it only makes sense that landlords be part of the equation to eliminate bedbugs in their buildings.”

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

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 uncooperative landlords.

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The measure would require the state Department of Health and Senior Services to create an informational pamphlet to educate renters about bedbugs, and about renter's responsibilities to notify their landlord if bed bugs are detected.

The comprehensive legislation is the product of over six months of work with stakeholders, including tenant groups, rental housing providers, professional exterminators, local health boards and the state Department of Community Affairs.

"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."

"These pests are able to live for up to 18 months without food, and bedbugs are uniquely hard to dispose of without professional extermination," said Tucker (D-Essex). "Ensuring landlords work with their tenants to eradicate this nuisance is the right thing to do."

"These exterminations can require several treatments, each of which can carry a price tag of more than \$300," said Cruz-Perez (D-Camden). "Clearly, this is a cost many tenants cannot afford, nor which they should be held solely responsible."

The bill was approved 74-3 and now goes to the Senate for further consideration.

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