



Testimony before the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
Support with Amendments  
Senate Bill 192: Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2020  
February 26, 2020

Dear Mister Chair and Members of the Budget & Taxation Committee:

**The Daily Record supports the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (“BRFA”) with amendments.** We respectfully request that the committee strike from page 5, line 13 through page 7, line 19. This section of the BRFA, as introduced, repeals the current requirement that the Comptroller publish a list of abandoned properties in newspapers. Instead, the bill requires the abandoned property list be maintained on a state website and encourages the use of the website through referral ads in newspapers.

The state should not end the historic requirement to publish this vital information in the format that is most secure, provided by a third party, and most accessible to the greatest number of citizens.

Newspapers serve as the independent third party that verifies that the government has followed the law in communicating legally required information. Their permanence ensures that public notices are provided correctly and in a timely manner. Newspapers will never go back and change a public notice after the fact. They are uniquely qualified to play the role of ensuring that the government provides public notice in an open, transparent, timely manner.

Citizens are accustomed to finding legal notices in newspapers, and the abandoned property list enjoys wide readership around the state. Far fewer viewers actually find notices on government websites - and those are viewers actively looking for specific information. While Internet use is widespread, it is far from universal. In fact, it is least accessible to senior citizens, minorities, and those of lower socioeconomic status – the same populations arguably most in need of reclaiming their abandoned property.

Finally, the security of websites is a vexing issue for both private industry and governments. If the state were to post this notice solely on its own website, it would likely become an even greater target for hackers. Even minor alterations could have major unforeseen consequences, potentially dragging the government into costly and wasteful litigation. Printed notices, with independent verification of accuracy, make that outcome far less likely.

Eliminating public notice advertising in newspapers might save the state some money in the short term, but the cost could high in the long term, both in dollars and public confidence.

Since 1888, the Daily Record has provided trusted legal and business information to Maryland readers. Our mission is to provide timely, accurate, objective and thought-provoking business, legal and professional news. We take our role in providing public notices very seriously.

It is for these reasons that we respectfully request a favorable with amendments report on SB 192.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Fischer-Huettner  
Publisher, The Daily Record