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MAYOR

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HB 566

February 12, 2020

TO: Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Nicholas Blendy, Deputy Director of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 566 - Opportunity Zone Enhancement Program - Eligibility –
Lead-Based Paint Affected Properties

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 566.

House Bill 566 alters the information required to be provided to the Department of Commerce in order to qualify for certain tax credit enhancements under the Opportunity Zone Enhancement Program to include, with respect to certain qualified opportunity zone business property, a detailed plan for the performance of certain lead hazard reduction activities.

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) combats childhood lead poisoning through a number of means, including medical case management of lead poisoned children, environmental inspections of homes with lead hazards and enforcement of applicable laws, prosecution of noncompliant property owners, intensive primary-prevention home-visiting, health education and outreach, and referrals of families to lead abatement programs.

Lead is a powerful neurotoxin that can have debilitating effects on people of all ages. In particular, it can severely compromise the behavioral and cognitive development of children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that over 4 million households nationwide have children exposed to lead. Every child deserves to grow up free from the permanent harm lead exposure can cause; unfortunately, lead hazards in homes remain a serious threat. HB 566 would incentivize property and business owners to address lead hazards and keep children safe.

Baltimore City contains 42 of the 149 census tracts designated as Opportunity Zones by the U.S. Treasury.¹ Designated Opportunity Zones are located throughout the city, with many located in neighborhoods with high rates of lead poisoning.² As a result, adding the requirements found in this bill to the process of qualifying for Opportunity Zone credits will help provide greater incentive to removing lead hazards.

For the above reasons, we respectfully request a **favorable** report on HB 566.

¹ <http://baltimoredevelopment.com/opportunity-zones>

² <http://baltimoredevelopment.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Baltimore-City-Opportunity-Zone-Census-Tracts-Neighborhoods.pdf>