



HB 57
PROPERTY TAX— TAX SALES – REQUIREMENT TO SELL
HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE
JANUARY 24, 2023
POSITION: SUPPORT

The SOS Fund, an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, addresses the systemic housing instability experienced by historically red-lined communities in Baltimore City. This instability has resulted in generations of residents losing their homes, thus denying them the wealth-building capacity of homeownership. **The SOS Fund supports HB 57 because Baltimore City and every Maryland jurisdiction should have the right to decide whether or not to hold tax sale auctions.**

We provide legacy residents with the legal, material (home repair), and financial (bailout) tools that will allow them to be less vulnerable to displacement which is the greatest threat to further loss of equity. The majority of the referrals made to our program come from either legal service providers or non-profit housing service providers. 90% of our clients have an income that falls below 80% AMI (area median income). 81% of our clients identify as Black or African American.

Our organization works with residents who reside in the majority black neighborhoods which experienced the most aggressive form of housing discrimination. The majority of our clients are older (over 60), black women who have struggled to maintain their homes with little assistance, for decades. The ongoing disinvestment in their neighborhoods has trapped many of them in a lower socioeconomic status resulting in persistent poverty and our tax sale only perpetuates this cycle of economic violence. Since its inception, this system of tax collection has put the interest of outside investors ahead of the residents of our neighborhoods. Although the profits from the system to these debt purchasers have been lucrative, the cost burden to our city has been enormous. HB 57 will allow our jurisdiction to take full control of the process debt collection so that we might build a more just an equitable system, one that favors people over the profit of predatory actors.

For the above reasons,

The SOS Fund urges a FAVORABLE report on HB 57.

Please contact John Kern, Director of Programs, with any questions. john@thesosfund.com

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