



Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore, Inc.

February 2, 2024

Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
House Office Building
Room 131
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 243

Honorable Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Committee:

I am the Chief Executive Officer of Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore (NHS), and a resident of Baltimore City. Our organization believes that economic and social justice are a right for all residents and communities. We promote this belief by removing barriers of access to homeownership, helping resident access resources to maintain their homes, and supporting communities historically impacted by systemic disinvestment.

Over the past ten years I have worked to advocate for changes to the tax sale system that support residents and communities. With support from this committee and the full legislature we have together made significant improvements to the tax sale system. While more change is needed, we can be proud of the work accomplished together. Many of the changes that have been made have been limited only to Baltimore City. These include raising the threshold for owner occupied properties to be included in tax sale, increasing the amount of time for filings on owner occupied properties which provides additional time before significant fees begin to be imposed for legal work on the property, and removing water bills from tax sale. HB243 addresses many of these critical issues. The bill establishes a statewide minimum for inclusion of owner occupied properties of \$1,000. Raising this threshold significantly impacts many lower income households. The year after the threshold was raised from \$250-750 about 10 years ago in Baltimore City about 2,500 homeowners were not included in tax sale. This impact will be further expanded by raising the threshold to \$1,000 and expanded across the state. The bill also establishes the redemption rate for owner occupied properties at 6%. This will further support Maryland families by lowering the cost of redemption. The bill also extends to 10 months when the foreclosure process can begin for owner occupied properties. This time allows owners the opportunity to redeem the property.

HB243 includes many important protections for property owners within the tax sale system. We ask that the Committee issue a favorable report on HB243.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel T. Ellis".

Daniel T. Ellis
Executive Director



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