



BERNARD C. “JACK” YOUNG
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

HB 768

March 10, 2020

TO: Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Nicholas Blendy, Deputy Director of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 768 – Baltimore City – Baltimore City – Repossession for Failure to Pay Rent – Registration and License Information

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH SPONSOR AMENDMENTS

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Committee, please be advised the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports with sponsor amendments** House Bill (HB) 768.

HB 768 amends the Public Local Laws of Baltimore City to prohibit a landlord who has failed to properly register their property in accordance with the requirements of the City of Baltimore’s rental property licensure requirements from using the resources of the District Court system and the Sheriff of Baltimore to evict a tenant. This bill is priority legislation for Mayor Bernard C. “Jack” Young for the 2020 General Assembly legislative session.

The Mayor and City Council of Baltimore enacted an ordinance¹ that required all rental properties to register with the City’s Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) beginning on January 1, 2019. The requirements are two-fold: (1) register with HCD via an online portal; and (2) be inspected by a Maryland-licensed, Baltimore City-registered home inspector.

The BCA advises that as of the beginning of February of this year, City HCD estimates that they have issued rental licenses for approximately 52%-55% of the current total estimated universe of current rental units in Baltimore City. From the BCA

¹ See Baltimore City Ordinance 18-130. Available at <https://baltimore.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3317951&GUID=7EB77044-69AA-47EF-ABDA-EB282B648C7C>, last accessed March 9, 2020.

perspective, HB 768 would aid significantly in achieving two important operational goals: (1) preventing scofflaw landlords from abusing taxpayer funded government resources in the District Court and the Sheriff's office to evict tenants when they have not come into compliance with local laws expressly enacted to improve and monitor the health, safety and welfare of the tenants in the City of Baltimore; and (2) to shift the burden onto the landlord to affirmatively prove they are in compliance with these laws, rather than the existing burden shifting regime that alternates back and forth between landlord and tenant, which has the practical effect of imposing an additional burden on taxpayer resources when City HCD produces evidentiary information around these licenses at issue.

The BCA concludes by noting that the bill sponsor has worked tirelessly with all impacted parties and that the BCA fully supports the adoption of the sponsor amendments. HB 768 with the inclusion of the sponsor amendments provides a massive step forward in preventing landlords from abusing taxpayer funded government resources where they are flouting local laws designed to protect the very tenants they profit off of on a daily basis.

We request a **favorable with sponsor amendments** report on HB 768.