



Testimony SB 349
Budget & Taxation Committee
January 19, 2022
Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Guzzone & Members of the Budget & Taxation Committee:

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland's community development sector and serves nearly 200 member organizations. CDN—focuses on small affordable housing developers, housing counseling agencies and community-based non-profits across the state of Maryland. The mission of CDN is to promote, strengthen and advocate for the community development sector throughout Maryland's urban, suburban and rural communities. CDN envisions a state in which all communities are thriving and where people of all incomes have abundant opportunities for themselves and their families.

CDN has been part of the ongoing work to reform the process of tax sale in the state since 2016. In 2017, CDN was a lead partner in the Task Force to Study Tax Sales in Maryland. CDN currently serves on the Baltimore City Mayor's Tax Sale Workgroup in Baltimore City.

SB 349 Authorizing Baltimore County to grant a property tax credit against the county property tax imposed on a dwelling that is owned by a homeowner whose combined gross income exceeds \$60,000 if the homeowner demonstrates certain criteria, including that the homeowner or member of the homeowner's immediate family suffered a hardship related to an illness or an accident or a property casualty event at the homeowners dwelling.

The majority of people in the state impacted by tax sale are older, single, African American women living at or below the poverty line. In 2019, the average amount owed was just under \$2500. Though most of the homeowners were eligible for the Homeowner's Tax Credit Program, few had applied or were aware of the program. For these vulnerable homeowners, the tax sale has stripped away generational wealth and housing stability.

Over the years, Maryland has enacted more consumer-friendly policy to prevent the poorest homeowners from losing their houses. These improvements include higher thresholds for tax sale, removal of water bills, and the appointment of a public ombudsman to help owner occupants keep their homes.

Allowing low-income homeowners who have suffer health hardships during Covid-19 to get an additional credit will help to reduce the loss of generational wealth and displacement.

We urge your favorable report.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director, Community Development Network