



**BILL HENRY**  
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

City Hall – Room 204  
100 Holliday St Baltimore, MD 21202

February 1, 2022

The Hon. Paul Pinsky, Chairman  
Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee  
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis MD 21401

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 276, “Baltimore City Public School Buildings—Notice of Demolition—Repeal.” SB 276 will be heard by the Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee on February 3, 2022.

Senate Bill 276 was introduced at my request, to correct an anomaly in state law that effectively negated part of a Baltimore City Ordinance I sponsored in 2015 while serving on the City Council. Along with ten other City Council members, including our current Mayor Brandon Scott and current Council President Nick Mosby, I introduced Council Bill 15-0590, “Demolition of City Structures,” which was enacted and codified as Ordinance 16-451. This local law has a reasonable and practical goal: to ensure that if a City agency plans to demolish a City-owned building, it first must provide a 30-day notice to the City Council. This gives council members the opportunity to consider the planned demolition and its impact on the surrounding community, and allows time for elected officials to address any concerns they may be aware of or they expect might be raised by their constituents. It is a quintessentially local solution for a local issue.

During the 2016 General Assembly session, House Bill 36, the “Rebuilding Baltimore City Communities Act of 2016” was introduced by the City House Delegation as enabling legislation to allow the Mayor and City Council to grant a property tax credit for the construction of a new home, or rehabilitation of a vacant home, in neighborhoods with a high number of vacant dwellings. On the last day of the session a conference committee assigned to reconcile conflicting House and Senate amendments on HB 36 added an amendment to exempt buildings owned by the City Public School System from the local notice requirement. This amendment added a new section to the Economic Development Article of the State Code, and certainly had nothing to do with a property tax exemption for vacant or newly-constructed dwellings. It seemed to be an unanticipated end-run around a local law that addresses a fundamentally local issue.

In 2020, I finished three terms on the City Council and was elected as the first new City Comptroller in 24 years. In this position, I oversee the City’s Department of Real Estate (DoRE) which is charged with a wide range of functions related to City-owned real property, which obviously includes school buildings.

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The DoRE is responsible for the disposition of real property owned by the City, and collaborates with other City agencies such as the Department of General Services, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Mayor's Office to determine, when necessary, which agency should have primary jurisdiction over City-owned buildings. As one of the primary stewards of City property and a citywide elected fiscal watchdog, I have a duty to my constituents to make sure that any disposal of City property is properly vetted through a publicly transparent process. Surely in the age of near-instantaneous electronic communication it is not burdensome to the City Public School System to give 30 days' notice to the City Council of a planned demolition, nor is it burdensome to amend the State law so the local ordinance can operate as it was intended.

For all these reasons, I respectfully request that the committee give SB 276 a favorable report. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 410-396-4577 or via email at [comptroller@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:comptroller@baltimorecity.gov).

Sincerely,



Bill Henry  
Baltimore City Comptroller

CC: The Hon. Cory McCray, Chair, Baltimore City Senate Delegation  
Ms. Natasha Mehu, Mayor's Office of Government Relations