



Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition

Testimony to the House Ways and Means Committee
HB204: Homeowners' Property Tax Credit – Application Filing Deadline – Extension
Position: Favorable

February 1, 2022

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
House Ways & Means Committee
Room 131, HOB
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, Ways & Means Committee

Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kimberly Snyder and I am a social work intern at the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition (MCRC). MCRC is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that advances economic rights and financial inclusion for Maryland consumers through research, education, direct service, organizing, and advocacy. Our 8,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland.

We are here in strong support of HB 204.

For the past five years, MCRC's SOAR (Securing Older Adult Resources) program as part of our comprehensive financial capabilities work has led efforts to promote the Homeowners' Tax Credit. We extensively market the program, train service providers, VITA staff, and others how to screen for it, and partner with older-adult, legal services, and financial providers to increase the number of applicants each year. In 2021, MCRC returned \$86,745.07 in tax credits to financially fragile older adults.

However, despite this large initiative to help Maryland homeowners apply for the Homeowners' Tax Credit, some residents are unable to apply on time. For example, some homeowners hear of the Homeowner's Tax Credit program only once they have entered into the tax sale process. Increasing property taxes can be devastating to Maryland homeowners. Of those who enter tax sale, three-quarters are seniors and have household incomes of less than \$30,000 and nearly half are disabled, while a majority identify as Black.¹ Often those in tax sale also own their homes outright, having already paid off

¹ City Targets Elderly Homeowners For Property Tax Credit Outreach.
<https://www.wypr.org/2021-09-07/city-targets-elderly-homeowners-for-property-tax-credit-outreach>



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their mortgages. Other residents simply may not have been able to keep up with their taxes once the COVID-19 pandemic began and their businesses began closing.²

In addition, Maryland residents who have successfully applied on time in the past may experience a medical or financial hardship and as a result could miss the deadline. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant financial impact on older adults; history shows us that adults 60 and older experience a large decrease in total net wealth and an increase in debts, particularly property related debt, and experience significant increases in poverty status post-recession.³

As a result of the passage of HB 204, more Maryland residents will be able to stay in their homes, age in place, and maintain their intergenerational investment.

For all these reasons, we are in strong support of HB 204 and urge a favorable report.

Best,

Kimberly Snyder
SOAR Intern

² Activists Plead Scott To Follow Promise To Remove Some Homeowners From Tax Sale.

<https://www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2021-04-30/activists-plead-scott-to-follow-promise-to-remove-some-homeowners-from-tax-sale>

³ Economic Insecurity for Older Adults in the Presence of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

<https://www.ncoa.org/article/economic-insecurity-for-older-adults-in-the-presence-of-the-covid-19-pandemic>