

Plan for Revitalizing Baltimore City: Testimony in Support of HB 310 and in Support of a Land Value Tax Shift for Baltimore City

Dear Delegates:

I know how much you care about Baltimore's becoming a self-reliant, prosperous city, so I'm here to speak with you about this very purpose. This is why I'm here to ask your support of House Bill 310. This bill is intended to give the Baltimore City Council the authority to set property-related taxes in the city. Having this authority would enable the City Council to shift away from taxing buildings and other owner-created improvements onto the value of the land itself, thus removing the incentive to hold land for the sole purpose of speculation and not wealth creation.

The needs for revenue for infrastructure in Baltimore don't go away. Most of the tax plans that come forward don't deal with this fundamental problem because they literally mean taking money out of people's pockets—money that is earned through jobs, professions, etc. As the City would begin taxing land held for speculation and relying less on nickeling and diming its citizens, we could see a shift through taxation towards a prosperous Baltimore.

Baltimore needs to use its immense potential to move forward economically and socially. The ability to cause its own taxation is fundamental. By first taking away the ability to speculate on land holdings for no commercially valuable enterprise, Baltimore could move to a point where taxation only on land value could liberate the most needy and marginalized citizens of this city. Baltimore must gain the ability to tax land only held for speculation and ultimately, hopefully, set up a land value tax only. Baltimore will be able to liberate itself from the shackles of taxing ideas that hold it back from other Maryland jurisdictions. Bill 310 liberates Baltimore so that it can call its own financial shots and experiment with systems that will stop punishing the good property owners and stop rewarding the bad property owners. This system is called land value taxation (LVT).

Please let this happen for the sake of this wonderful, great, historical city—home to so many firsts in American history—so we can give it a leg up to prosper. Please make HB 310 a reality.

Thank you. God speed,

Lorenzo Gaztañaga
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