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Testimony

HB231 – Baltimore City – Property Taxes – Authority to Set Special Rates

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FAVORABLE

Honorable Chair Guzzone and Distinguished Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee:

I am writing to urge your support for **HB231 – Baltimore City – Property Taxes – Authority to Set Special Rates**. Thanks so much to our own Delegate Boyce for introducing this bill.

Currently, every jurisdiction has the authority to set their own tax rates, but all properties – no matter what type of property – has to be taxed the same rate in that jurisdiction. While we do have the Homestead Tax Credit for homeowners to gain some relief when assessments increase, taxing at the same rate is inequitable for our cities.

In Baltimore City, we are very excited about the opportunity that this bill provides. With the authority to set differential tax rates we could be flexible in how we apply the property tax on various properties, which can allow us to be creative in our incentive structure.

My highest priority is the Vacancy Tax, which – once this bill passes, I will introduce in the City Council. In this scenario, properties that have Vacant Building Notices – which designates them as derelict – will be taxed higher than residents. This is an incentive for the owner to sell, to fix the property, or to be foreclosed upon as the liens exceed the value of the property with our new In Rem tax foreclosure process.

Baltimore City has roughly 15000 vacant properties, and only owns 1200 of them. We own ½ of the vacant lots. We have to continue our effort to foreclose on these properties to take possession and work through our block by block strategies to dispose of the properties. The Vacancy Tax will allow us to do this.

I urge your favorable report for this legislation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions. I can be reached on 410-396-4814 or via email at odette.ramos@baltimorecity.gov.

Respectfully Submitted:

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