



Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore, Inc.

March 28, 2023

Senator Guy Guzzone
Budget and Taxation Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 235

Honorable Senator Guzzone and Members of the Committee:

I am the Executive Director of Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore (NHS), and a resident of Baltimore City. Our organization believes that economic and social justice are a right for all people and communities. We promote this belief by removing barriers of access to homeownership, helping resident access resources to maintain their homes, and supporting communities historically impacted by systemic disinvestment. I have worked on tax sale reform supporting residents and communities for more than 10 years and currently serve as co-chair of Mayor Scott's Tax Sale Work Group identifying ways to reform and improve the tax sale system.

HB235 extends the date from which fees can be included in the redemption amount for liens purchased through tax sale from 4 months to 6 months. This change will provide additional time for property owners to redeem their property without incurring significant additional fees. For some homeowners this is the difference between being able to afford the redemption and not being able to keep the home. In Baltimore City the timeline was extended from 4 to 7 months several years ago. In our experience this additional time has helped residents be able to preserve their home. The additional time is also helpful for property owners accessing local and state programs to assist with these payoffs. It often takes several months to navigate through these programs and the additional time before additional fees are assessed increases the opportunity to benefit from these programs.

We ask that the Committee issue a *favorable* report on HB 235 as we continue to work on ways to reform the tax sale system.

Sincerely,

Daniel T. Ellis
Executive Director



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