



HB 867/SB 766 - Baltimore City - Collection of Unpaid Property Taxes
Position: Support without amendments

Fight Blight Bmore's (FBB's) mission is to remediate blight through community projects and programs that are envisioned, directed and owned by the community. An economic, environmental and social justice organization, FBB believes that blight's presence - vacant, abandoned, dilapidated, underutilized and misutilized properties - has arisen from impacts of systemic racism, including disinvestment and depopulation, thus significantly decreasing taxable properties in historically Black neighborhoods across the city. Tax sale has been a major driver of blight in Baltimore particularly in Black neighborhoods. **We support this bill without amendments because it will allow the city to begin to redress the harms caused to homeowners and communities by third party collection of municipal debt via the tax sale.**

What the Bill Does:

- Gives Baltimore City the Authority to create our own tax collection system which would include working with residents in arrears by canceling the tax sale, providing payment plans and connecting residents to additional services.
- Uses In Rem foreclosure ONLY when the resident does not pay after extensive outreach (3 years, vs 6 months in regular tax sale). No additional fees are placed on the residents and support is provided. This is not something we want to do and is again a very last resort.

A Major Problem with the Amendment:

The proposed amendment would eliminate protections for heir's properties. Many properties in tax sale have listed owners who are the deceased relatives of the occupants. This is an especially prevalent issue in Black communities. Because the heirs often think the properties automatically become theirs at the death of their loved one or due to lack of awareness of estate administration or as a result of sheer grief many properties do not go through probate. As such the state doesn't consider them to be owner occupied. The proposed amendment would remove protections for heirs living in their family homes. Many of whom already have been subject to a litany of other racist housing, community and economic development policies in their lifetimes like the existing tax sale.