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BILL NO.: SB 1119

TITLE: Baltimore County – Property Taxes – Authority to Set a Special Rate for Vacant and Abandoned Property

SPONSOR: Senator Sydnor

COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: March 12, 2024

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 1119 – Baltimore County – Property Taxes – Authority to Set a Special Rate for Vacant and Abandoned Property. HB 1119 is a straightforward enabling piece of legislation that would authorize Baltimore County to tax vacant properties at a different rate.

Baltimore County has spent a great deal of time and effort examining strategies to best address chronically vacant properties in Baltimore County. As is the case in many jurisdictions, the vacant housing present in Baltimore County impacts the health, safety, and welfare of residents in the surrounding communities. Furthermore, this vacant housing represents missed opportunities in an already strained housing market. Baltimore County has taken action through local legislation to create an official vacant designation, and has utilized the process to establish a public-facing vacant property inventory. This local legislation names several specific criteria to assist in the identification of the vacant property, and includes an appeals process to provide property owners with due process.

SB 1119 would allow Baltimore County to expand on this infrastructure by financially incentivizing property owners to take steps to move their properties from vacancy towards occupancy. This could mean selling the property or bringing it up to code compliance to it could become a usable unit. Owners would additionally have the option to engage with the County, which is prepared to connect that owner with a local developer to rehabilitate the property, and potentially convert it into an affordable homeownership opportunity for a first-time homebuyer.

Accordingly, Baltimore County urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 1119 from the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.