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MAYOR

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HB0359

March 21, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 359 - Petition for Guardianship of the Property of Alleged Disabled Person - Stay of Civil Actions and Proceedings

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 359.

HB 359 allows petitioners to request stays on certain civil proceedings, including evictions and foreclosures, against a disabled person for whom a guardianship of property is being appointed. This will enable advocates for disabled persons for whom a court is assigning guardianship to stabilize their living situations.

Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) serves as the city's Area Agency on Aging (AAA). As part of its duties as the AAA, BCHD serves as the court-appointed "guardian of the person" for City residents ages 65 and older who have been legally adjudicated disabled when the individual has no family members or friends who can serve as their guardian. The Deputy Commissioner of Aging is assigned the responsibility of guardianship of the person by the courts.

BCHD's AAA operates the largest public guardianship program in the State for persons 65 and over, acting as the guardian for over 180 disabled persons at any given time. Stabilizing housing for these clients is a primary goal of the guardianship program, but success in doing so requires coordination between the "guardian of person" and the "guardian of property." By staying actions like evictions and foreclosures for the disabled person until a guardian of property is appointed, HB 359 will give the BCHD more time to develop a plan for the client, preventing homelessness and unnecessary hospitalization.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 359.