



**Testimony HB 44**  
**Ways & Means Committee**  
**February 1, 2024**  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chairperson Atterbeary and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland's community development sector and serves nearly 200 member organizations. CDN—focuses on small affordable housing developers, housing counseling agencies and community-based non-profits across the state of Maryland. The mission of CDN is to promote, strengthen and advocate for the community development sector throughout Maryland's urban, suburban and rural communities. CDN envisions a state in which all communities are thriving and where people of all incomes have abundant opportunities for themselves and their families.

CDN has been part of the ongoing work to reform the process of tax sale in the state since 2016. In 2017, CDN was a lead partner in the Task Force to Study Tax Sales in Maryland. CDN currently serves on the Baltimore City Mayor's Tax Sale Workgroup in Baltimore City.

HB 44 – This bill helps homeowners by authorizing the State Department of Assessments and Taxation to exclude public assistance received in a cash grant for purposes of the renters' property tax relief program and the homeowners' property tax credit program; increasing the combined gross income limit used to determine eligibility for the tax credits; and increasing, from \$300,000 to \$450,000, the maximum assessed value of a dwelling on which the homeowners' property tax credit is calculated.

Most of the people in the state impacted by tax sale are older, single, African American women living at or below the poverty line. In 2019, the average amount owed was just under \$2500. Though most of the homeowners were eligible for the Homeowner's Tax Credit Program, few had applied or were aware of the program. For these vulnerable homeowners, the tax sale has stripped away generational wealth and housing stability.

Over the years, Maryland has enacted more consumer-friendly policy to prevent homeowners from losing their houses. These improvements include higher thresholds for tax sale, removal of water bills, and the appointment of a public ombudsman to help owner occupants keep their homes. Allowing this exclusion of benefits and increasing the maximum assessed value of a house on which the homeowners' property tax credit is calculated, will help to save generational wealth and help many older adults to remain in their homes and communities.

We urge your favorable report for HB 44.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director