

WES MOORE
Governor

ARUNA MILLER
Lt. Governor



MICHAEL HIGGS
Director

MARCUS ALZONA
Deputy Director

301 W. Preston Street, Room 801, Baltimore, Maryland 21201
Legislative Liaison: Joshua.Greenberg@Maryland.gov
1-888-246-5941 TTY: 1-800-735-2258
www.dat.maryland.gov

HEARING DATE: February 1, 2024

BILL: HB0016

TITLE: Tax Sales - Homeowner Protection Program - Funding

SDAT POSITION: SUPPORT

The Department of Assessments and Taxation supports House Bill 16 - Tax Sales - Homeowner Protection Program - Funding. This bill would create new funding pathways for the Homeowner Protection Program, a program that helps Maryland's most vulnerable homeowners by keeping them out of tax sale at no cost to their local government.

The Department anticipates growth in enrollment into the Homeowner's Protection Program in 2024 and expects the program to be at capacity by the end of the year. In FY23, the Department received 1,514 inquiries from homeowners seeking assistance, a more than 50% increase from FY22. When the Department notified homeowners of the program in outreach efforts, the tax sale helpline received 1,212 calls in January 2024 alone. At current funding levels, the HPP is limited to having 125 homeowners enrolled.

House Bill 16 would greatly strengthen the Department's efforts to keep homeowners in their homes by creating new avenues for funding for the Homeowner Protection Program. With more than 13,000 owner-occupied liens advertised for tax sale, and 3,000 owner-occupied liens being sold per year, increased funding will allow the Homeowner Protection Program to assist more homeowners. The Department estimates that this bill could bring an additional \$180,000 to the Homeowner Protection Fund, which would help bring dozens of homeowners out of tax sales and get property tax revenues and delinquent payments back into the hands of county governments.

Accordingly, the Department respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 16.