



**SB 724 Baltimore City – Tax Sales – Heir-Occupied Property and Registry
Budget and Taxation**

Date: February 25, 2025

Time: 1:00pm

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

The SOS Fund, an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, addresses the systemic housing instability experienced by historically red-lined communities in Baltimore City. This instability has resulted in generations of residents losing their homes, thus denying them the wealth-building capacity of homeownership. ***SOS supports SB724 with amendments because it reduces vulnerabilities to home, equity, and neighborhood loss.***

In order for this bill to have more effectiveness and efficient the following amendments are proposed:

- Change Pg 1, lines 17-19 to say: In Baltimore City, the tax collector must not sell a property at tax sale if the total amount of taxes, interest, and penalties is less than \$1,000. This change aligns the bill with HB59/SB192.
- Change Pg 2, lines 2-5 to say: In Baltimore City, the tax collector may choose not to sell a home if it is owned by a homeowner or occupied by an heir of a deceased homeowner who is low-income, at least 65 years old, or disabled—if the City Tax Sale Ombudsman requests it. Removing extra eligibility requirements ensures protection reaches those who need it. Giving the Ombudsman the authority to make the request also reduces the burden on homeowners and aligns with the Ombudsman's role.
- Add language requiring the tax collector to transfer payments made on subsequent years' property taxes to outstanding tax liens if the lien purchaser attempts to foreclose on the owner's right to redeem.
- Add language requiring the tax collector to remove a property from tax sale if the Tax Sale Ombudsman finds:
 - The property is misclassified
 - There is a billing error in the property tax record
 - There was a problem with billing notifications
 - A payment was made and applied to the wrong account, address, or tax year

Note: FBB and SOS Fund stand ready to seed the initial data set of 7700+ heirs properties identified during our recent Heirs Property Pilot. And, to help the responsible agencies design and roll out the registry.

SOS supports SB724 with the above listed amendments, as it would be a step toward removing systemic barriers to generational wealth transfer and reduce vulnerabilities to home, equity and neighborhood loss. SOS asks that this committee accepts these amendments and then issues a favorable report on SB 724.

For the above reasons,

SOS Fund urges a favorable report after integrating amendments above.

Please contact John Kern, Director of Programs, with any questions. john@thesosfund.com 410.303.3738