

City of Baltimore - SB 573.pdf

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Position: FAV



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB 0573

February 6, 2025

TO: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

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

RE: Senate Bill SB 0573 Baltimore City - Ordinance Enforcement - Amount of Fines and Penalties

POSITION: Support

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 0573.

SB 0573 would amend Section (48) of Article II of the Baltimore City Charter to increase the cap on civil and criminal penalties from the current \$1,000 to \$10,000. This adjustment would provide the City with an essential tool to deter and punish illegal dumping and other offenses that harm public safety, community well-being, and drain City resources.

Illegal dumping has a major impact on Baltimore City. The Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) responds to over 15,000, 311 complaints of illegal dumping each year, each one requiring an investigator to respond and investigate, then costing Baltimore tax payers millions of dollars in cleanup. While we maintain a proactive illegal dumping camera campaign, which can lead to prosecution; DHCD also utilizes its citation authority to try and curb the behavior. Our involvement with this issue over the years shows us that people illegally dump out of convenience, but also in an effort to save money. The current maximum penalty of \$1000 does not serve as a sufficient deterrent. Increasing the fine amount would be a great step in helping not only send a message to those that illegally dump, but will also send a message to Baltimore residents that we are serious about holding dumpers accountable.

The current \$1,000 cap is insufficient to address the severity of certain other offenses beyond illegal dumping, for example; Failure to Abate Vacant Building Violations, Illegal Signage Posting and Unlicensed Street Vending. Increasing the cap in the Charter provides the necessary legal authorization to enable the City Council to separately pass ordinances to adjust penalties for specific offenses.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report on SB 0573.

SB0573-JPR-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FAV



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For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report on SB 0573.

MMHA - 2025 - SB573 - UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: Matthew Pipkin

Position: UNF



Senate Bill 573

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Bill: Senate Bill 573 Baltimore City - Ordinance Enforcement - Amount of Fines and Penalties

Date: February 6th, 2025

Position: Unfavorable

The Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA) is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members house more than 538,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA's membership consists of owners and managers of more than 210,000 rental housing homes in over 958 apartment communities and more than 250 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

Senate Bill 573 increases the maximum amount that Baltimore City is authorized to establish for civil and criminal fines and penalties for violating certain ordinances, rules, or regulations from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

Consistent with our testimony from last session's House Bill 501 that increased charter counties' ability to fine from \$1,000 to \$5,000, MMHA believes that reasonable fines serve as a necessary deterrent to bad actors. However, an increase in civil and criminal fines and penalties from \$1,000 to \$10,000 (a 900% increase) is punitive. MMHA is concerned about the unintended consequences. Within our industry, this could lead to more evictions in Baltimore City. Housing providers will be more inclined to find a resident in breach of lease if their conduct results in a \$10,000 fine that the property owner must pay. Further, such fines may lead to increased litigation and legal challenges, as individuals and business entities contest the fairness of the fines. This will further strain resources within the overwhelmed Baltimore City legal system, and result in lengthy legal battles that further burden both the affected parties.

To mitigate these unintended consequences, the Committee should carefully consider the potential impacts of fines, ensure fairness and proportionality in application, and explore alternative approaches to address undesirable behaviors without resorting to unreasonable measures. For these reasons, we respectfully request an **unfavorable report** on Senate Bill 573.

Please contact Matthew Pipkin, Jr. at (443) 995-4342 or mpipkin@mmhaonline.org with any questions.

SB573_MRA_UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Price

Position: UNF

MARYLAND RETAILERS ALLIANCE

The Voice of Retailing in Maryland



**SB573 Baltimore City - Ordinance Enforcement - Amount of Fines and Penalties
Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 6th, 2025**

Position: Unfavorable

Background: SB573 would increase the maximum amount of fines assessed for code ordinance violations to \$10,000.

Comments: The Maryland Retailers Alliance (MRA) writes to express concerns about **SB573 Baltimore City - Ordinance Enforcement - Amount of Fines and Penalties**, which would increase the maximum amount for fines levied for civil and criminal violations of City ordinances from \$1,000 to \$10,000. We understand that this may be an effort to both address high crime rates and increase revenue for the City; however, the City of Baltimore is already an expensive jurisdiction to both live and conduct business in. Between high utility costs, taxes, insurance and security rates, many business owners must carefully weigh the desire to operate within the City against the cost of locating there. Additionally, the average business does not operate with the intent of breaking the law. Incurring a \$1,000 fine for an accidental code violation without an opportunity for corrective action is already costly for small businesses that are struggling to break even; increasing that potential fine by 900% would have a major impact on entities that find themselves in violation of an ordinance due to ignorance, an accident, or honest mistake. We would caution the Committee and City against taking such drastic measures as an opportunity to increase revenue or as a primary tactic to address overall crime rates.

Thank you for your consideration.