



Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore, Inc.

January 24, 2025

Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
House Office Building
Room 131
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 59

Honorable Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Committee:

I am the Chief Executive Officer of Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore (NHS), and a resident of Baltimore City. Our organization believes that economic and social justice are a right for all residents and communities. We promote this belief by removing barriers of access to homeownership, helping resident access resources to maintain their homes, and supporting communities historically impacted by systemic disinvestment.

Over the past twelve years I have worked to advocate for changes to the tax sale system that support residents and communities. With support from this committee and the full legislature we have together made improvements to the tax sale system. While more change is needed, we can be proud of the work accomplished together. Many of the changes that have been made have been limited only to Baltimore City. These include raising the threshold for owner occupied properties to be included in tax sale, increasing the amount of time for filings on owner occupied properties which provides additional time before significant fees begin to be imposed for legal work on the property, and removing water bills from tax sale. HB 59 addresses many of these critical issues. The bill establishes a statewide minimum for inclusion of owner occupied properties of \$1,000. Raising this threshold significantly impacts many lower income households. The year after the threshold was raised from \$250-750 about 10 years ago in Baltimore City about 2,500 homeowners were not included in tax sale. This impact will be further expanded by raising the threshold to \$1,000 and expanded across the state. The bill also establishes the redemption rate for owner occupied properties at 6%. This will further support Maryland families by lowering the cost of redemption. The bill also extends to 10 months when the foreclosure process can begin for owner occupied properties. This time allows owners the opportunity to redeem the property.

Last year there was an amendment to the bill to include all water bills in tax sale. In 2019, water bills were removed from tax sale in Baltimore City for all residential properties. The amendment would have removed the protections provided by the General Assembly to protect residential



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property owners from tax sale for water bills. It is critical these protections remain in place for residents of Baltimore City and be expanded to the rest of the state. HB 59 establishes these protections for the entire state. It is critical that the General Assembly reject any attempts to remove these protections from residents of Baltimore City and support expansion of these protections for the entire state.

HB 59 includes many important protections for property owners within the tax sale system. We ask that the Committee issue a *favorable* report on HB 59 and reject any attempts to amend the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. T. Ellis".

Daniel T. Ellis
Chief Executive Officer



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