

Written Testimony in Opposition to HB59

Real Property – Expedited Wrongful Detainer Proceedings – Property for Sale or Lease House Economic Matters Committee

2/26/26

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cairo Johari-Pearl Harris. I am a constituent of Legislative District 45 and an heir occupant of my family's generational home in Baltimore City. I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on HB 59.

My family has owned our home since the 1960s. It was promised to my father by my Great-Great Aunt Pearl, and it has remained in our family for over sixty years. Today, I am raising my one-year-old son in that same home. For us, this property is not simply real estate, it represents legacy, sacrifice, and generational stability.

On January 29th, 2026, the property was sold at tax sale over an alleged delinquency of approximately \$888. That lien is currently under investigation by the Baltimore City Bureau of Revenue Collections because it appears to stem from High Grass and Weeds/Trash citations issued in 2021. My family did not receive notice of those citations or of a pending tax sale. We learned of the October 2021 citation on Wednesday February 18th, 2026, after the tax sale. The year 2021 was the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when normal operations across the city were disrupted.

Additionally, there appears to be irregularities in the application of property tax payments that may affect the validity of the lien itself. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, we are confident the tax sale could be reversed.

Recently, an individual claiming to be the new owner removed the rear door lock and patio furniture from our property. When law enforcement responded, that individual referred to me as a "squatter." I am not a squatter. My family has continuously occupied and maintained this home for decades. Yet under the current system, a person with no connection to our history was able to characterize us as trespassers in our own generational home.

HB 59 would significantly accelerate the timeline for removal following foreclosure of the right of redemption. By compressing hearing deadlines, shortening appeal windows, and requiring execution of warrants within 24 hours, the bill prioritizes speed over accuracy.

Post-foreclosure cases often involve complicated factual and procedural questions, including notice deficiencies, payment disputes, title issues, and administrative errors. Meaningful due process requires adequate time to investigate and correct those issues. Errors cannot realistically be uncovered or remedied within five business days.

Once a family is removed from a generational home, the loss is irreversible, even if a mistake is later discovered.

Families like mine deserve a full and fair opportunity to challenge potential errors before displacement occurs. HB 59 would erode that safeguard.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on HB 59.

Sincerely,
Cairo Johari-Pearl Harris
Legislative District 45