



HB 681

Baltimore City – Ordinance Enforcement – Amount of Fines and Penalties

Hearing before the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

March 4, 2026

POSITION: Favorable

Community Law Center (CLC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which is a legal partner to Maryland neighborhoods and nonprofits in pursuit of more just and vibrant communities. CLC provides direct legal representation to communities and nonprofits on issues like tax exemption and organizational governance, real estate, contracts, intellectual property, employment law, and more. We advocate on issues that impact our Maryland neighborhood and nonprofit clients, including vacant, nuisance, and abandoned properties.

CLC supports HB 681 to address vacant, nuisance, and abandoned properties in Baltimore City. HB 681 will increase to \$5,000 the maximum amount that Baltimore City may impose as a fine or penalty for violating certain ordinances, rules, or regulations. If passed, it will allow Baltimore City to impose this higher fine on property citations like Failure to Abate a Vacant Building Notice, to incentivize property owners in Baltimore City to address and rehab their vacant and nuisance properties. Baltimore City needs every tool in the toolbox to address vacant and nuisance properties, including higher fines. If a property owner fails to clean up their deteriorating property, or of a property owner has abandoned their property, or passed away and their heirs have not taken ownership, the mounting citations and fines on the property will eventually make the property eligible for in rem judicial foreclosure, a process authorized by Maryland state law to allow for the City to foreclose on vacant properties whose taxes, citations, and other liens exceed the property's assessed value. After the foreclosure, the City as the new owner can then take control of the property, stabilize and maintain it, and transfer it to a new owner who can return it to productive use. Giving Baltimore City greater latitude in how to address property violations, including allowing the imposition of higher fines, is one step toward that goal.

CLC supports HB 681. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

For the above reasons,

CLC urges a FAVORABLE VOTE ON HB 681.

Please contact Shana Roth-Gormley, Staff Attorney at Community Law Center, with any questions: ShanaR@communitylaw.org | 410-366-0922