

Honorable Governor Wes Moore
State House, 100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401 – 1925

Honorable Secretary Jacob Day
Department of Housing & Community
Development
7800 Harkins Road, Lanham, MD 20706

Wednesday, February 19, 2025

Dear Governor Moore and Secretary Day:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to ask you to reject all weakening amendments and move forward a clean bill for HB59/SB192 to protect all Marylanders and places of worship from water bill-related tax sales. We are concerned about reports that your administration is considering removing these protections from the legislation that your team introduced this year.

In December 2024, the administration promised the advocates of this bill to work together to pass this legislation in a manner that was clean and without amendments. Since that time, our coalition has been working hard to ensure the members in the key committees of jurisdiction oppose any amendments that would weaken the bill, just as was all promised.

We believe that these efforts, in fact, led to having the needed votes in the Local Revenue Subcommittee to turn back a harmful Del. Griffith 'owner-occupied' amendment on Friday, Feb. 7th, during the bill's very first official vote. But the committee chose to delay a vote and members relayed that they had not heard from the administration about their position on the amendments. This was surprising.

We are now learning that the administration may be willing to accept a range of amendments that are not in line with the ultimate goal of the bill to extend protections for all Marylanders caught up in the tax sale system for unpaid water bills. We know that several legislative members have expressed concerns, but we believe that we can educate and persuade the committees to pass a clean bill if we all work together. As you are aware, there are serious problems with the tax sale bills and misclassified properties, which would be left unchecked if these amendments go into effect.

For these reasons, we are asking for you as Governor and Secretary to recommit and give your solid support for a clean bill. We strongly urge you not to renege on the promise you made to our organizations. Nine out of fifteen counties did not use tax sales in 2023 for water bills, indicating that the tax sale process is unnecessary for water bill collection. We know our memberships and those Marylanders who will be unnecessarily harmed with the loss of their homes will be distraught and feel that this is a disservice if these amendments are permitted.

Sincerely,

- 1199 SEIU
- CASA

- Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
- Clean Water Action
- Community Development Network of MD
- Community Law Center
- Economic Action Maryland Fund (Economic Action)
- Fight Blight Bmore
- Food & Water Watch
- Jews United for Justice
- Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service
- NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF)
- NHS of Baltimore
- Northeast Catholic Community
- Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland
- Public Justice Center
- Shore Legal Access
- SOS Fund
- University of Baltimore School of Law Community Development Clinic