

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 21-0077R  
(First Reader)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Ramos and Dorsey

Introduced and read first time: October 18, 2021

Assigned to: Economic and Community Development Committee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Public Works, Department of Finance

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A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ORDINANCE concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Implementation of Landlord Licensing**

3 FOR the purpose of requesting representatives from the Department of Law, Department of  
4 Housing and Community Development, and Department of Public Works appear before the  
5 Council and provide a comprehensive report about progress made on the implementation of  
6 Council Bill 18-0185 (“Non-Owner-Occupied Dwelling Units, Rooming Houses, and Vacant  
7 Structures – Rental Dwellings – Registration and Licensing”).

8 **Recitals**

9 Council Bill 18-0185 (“Non-Owner-Occupied Dwelling Units, Rooming Houses, and Vacant  
10 Structures – Rental Dwellings – Registration and Licensing”) was passed in May of 2018, and  
11 enacted in August of that year. Implementation of the systems, inspections, and licensing were to  
12 be completed 90 days after enactment.

13 Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development (“DHCD”) has done a  
14 spectacular job setting up this important system to monitor the quality of rental housing. The  
15 program requires landlords to be inspected every 3 years to get their license.

16 Licensing is different from registration. All non-owner occupied properties have to be  
17 registered (Baltimore City Code, Article 13, § 4-5). That simply means DHCD knows that this is  
18 a non-owner occupied property. A licensed property means it has been inspected and is up to  
19 code so that residents can live on the premises. Inspections occur when the landlord pays an  
20 inspector from the approved list provided by DHCD to inspect the property, and proper  
21 paperwork is filed.

22 Residents have called 311 or notified their City Council member or a member of the DHCD  
23 team when they suspect a property has not been licensed, or they locate the property on  
24 CODEMAP or the City’s link to properties that are licensed. Additionally, neighbors have  
25 discovered unlicensed properties by first finding other violations. If that property is not licensed,  
26 DHCD issues fines of \$1000 for each infraction and failure to abate the violation.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.  
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

## Council Bill 21-0077R

1           Unfortunately, even 2.5 years after implementation, there are hundreds if not thousands of  
2 properties that are being rented that are not properly licensed. While COVID certainly had a  
3 factor in this, COVID also provided the opportunity to require landlords to comply if they wanted  
4 their tenants to receive rental assistance. This has prevented these renters from receiving critical  
5 aid during the ongoing pandemic.

6           Nevertheless, there are significant cases where landlords are refusing to comply with the law.  
7 While we've seen some cases highlighted in news media, we know from research that there are  
8 several properties with multiple citations for non-compliance, and there is still no movement on  
9 compliance. The current law states that DHCD could remove the renters from a non-licensed  
10 property if the living conditions are so poor they should not be living in the property.

11           In addition, there is evidence that false paperwork is presented to DHCD so that landlords  
12 can cut corners on repairs and inspections. This deeply undermines the goals of the licensing and  
13 registration ordinance.

14           The Baltimore City Council wants to learn about the increase in licensed properties so that  
15 rental assistance could be received, the estimated number of properties that have yet to be  
16 licensed, properties that have clearly not complied with the law and therefore need strict  
17 consequences, resources needed to fully implement the law, and any suggested changes to the  
18 legislation.

19           **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the City  
20 Council requests representatives from the Department of Law, Department of Housing and  
21 Community Development, and Department of Public Works appear before the Council and  
22 provide a comprehensive report about progress made on the implementation of Council Bill  
23 18-0185 (“Non-Owner-Occupied Dwelling Units, Rooming Houses, and Vacant Structures –  
24 Rental Dwellings – Registration and Licensing”).

25           **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
26 City Solicitor, Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development, the  
27 Director of the Department of Public Works, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City  
28 Council.