

BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL



BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

26-0152

*Installment Payment Plans – Property Taxes in
Arrears – Residential Property*

Public Testimony



Odette Ramos

Baltimore City Councilwoman

District 14

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100 N. Holliday Street, Room 553

Baltimore MD 21202

April 14, 2026

Testimony

26-0152 – Installment Payment Plans – Property Taxes in Arrears – Residential Property SUPPORT

Dear Chair McCray and Members of the Budget and Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present 26-0152 Installment Payment Plans – Property Taxes in Arrears – Residential Property. I am humbly asking your support for this legislation. It has been a pleasure working with the Department of Finance and Mayor's Office on this important bill. There is no need for amendments.

This bill authorizes the Department of Finance to enroll residents who are behind on their property taxes into payment plans that are monthly. The bill clarifies that payment plans are for all residential properties, and that the property will be removed from tax sale once a payment plan is established.

This is one of the critical pieces to assisting residents so they can avoid tax sale. Many residents just need the opportunity to stretch out payments, or they had a financial hardship one year and need a payment plan to get back on their feet. Moreover, there are several residents who have been pulled from the tax sale for a few years in a row that will need payment plans to be current on their taxes over time.

The property tax payment plans are for all residential properties. This is because we want to capture any residents in tangled title situations. There are several hundred properties where a family member may not have gone through the estates process to transfer the property in their name after a parent passed and there was no will assigning the property. We want these families to be able to participate. Moreover, we are including non-owner occupied properties so that renters have stability, and landlords having financial challenges can spread payments over multiple months. Property tax payment plans are also the cornerstone of reforming our predatory tax sale system.

The outreach to enroll residents started several weeks ago when the interest forms were sent out to ensure residents who wanted payment plans will be contacted once this bill passes. Enrollment in Promise Pay takes minutes. Additional outreach was included in tax bills, Final Bill and Legal Notices, and more. I look forward to working with stakeholders and the Administration to ensure each resident who receives a payment plan is also enrolled in all of the programs they are eligible for to ensure they become financially stable.

I humbly request your favorable report for this legislation.

Respectfully Submitted:

Odette Ramos
Baltimore City Councilwoman, District 14



Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore, Inc.

April 13, 2026

Chairwoman McCray
Budget & Appropriations Committee
Baltimore City Council
Room 400 City Hall
100 N. Holiday St.
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: Payment Plans 26-0152

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chairwoman McCray 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.

In October 2021, Mayor Scott appointed me co-chair, along with the Deputy City Administrator, of a work group charged with creating an equitable tax collection system that would serve the needs of residents of Baltimore City. The work group, made up of advocates and tax sale stakeholders familiar with the current tax sale system, recognized the need to support residents impacted by tax sale by creating a payment plan system to make paying taxes easier for residents. Through our work we looked at other jurisdictions that had low foreclosure rates while still maintaining strong rates of collections. The consistent characteristic present for these jurisdictions was strong payment plans. Many homeowners impacted by tax sale are seniors and legacy residents who have paid off mortgages on their homes. This results in residents receiving large property tax bills once a year. Payment plans allow for regular monthly payments which are much more manageable for families on fixed incomes. The other critical element needed for a successful system is consistent outreach from trusted partners ensuring that residents are aware of payment plan options. It is, however, critical that the payments plans are established first so the outreach can direct residents to real programs that can provide assistance.

In our research we also learned that strong collection rates were directly correlated to the presence of well-run payment plans. It is important for the health of the city finances to ensure we are doing everything possible to collect tax revenue. Payment plans are an important part of that strategy.



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Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore, Inc.

Collection rates are higher when property owners can pay bills over time rather than in single annual or semi-annual payments. We strongly support the work of Mayor Scott's administration to create a strong and healthy payment plan system. Successful implementation paired with healthy outreach will increase the collection rate for the city and reduce dependence on tax sale. This also supports the shared priority of protecting legacy and senior residents.

Thank you for your consideration of 26-0152. We appreciate the support of the committee and request a *favorable* report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel T. Ellis".

Daniel T. Ellis
Chief Executive Officer



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Testimony in Support w/ Amendment

Council Bill 26-0152 Installment Payment Plans – Property Taxes in Arrears – Residential Property

The SOS Fund, a nonprofit organization working to address systemic housing instability in historically redlined communities across Baltimore City. We write in strong support of Council Bill 26-0152 with a strongly suggested amendment.

This legislation recognizes a fundamental reality: residents should be able to pay their property taxes in installments rather than face the high cost and complexity of tax sale. Too often, homeowners fall behind not due to neglect, but because they cannot meet large lump-sum payments. The current system pushes them into tax sale—a process that is punitive, confusing, and frequently results in the loss of generational wealth.

By creating a pathway for installment payment plans and prohibiting enforcement actions while residents remain compliant, this bill provides a practical and humane alternative. It keeps people in their homes and stabilizes neighborhoods.

At the same time, the City should be responsible for collecting its own taxes. The Baltimore City Department of Finance should not rely on third-party investors to carry out this essential function for profit. The current tax sale system effectively outsources tax collection in a way that prioritizes investor returns over resident stability.

We must also acknowledge the broader historical context. Tax sale has roots in the post-Reconstruction era and has long functioned as a tool that disproportionately harms Black families. Nationally, it has contributed to the loss of more than 15 million acres of Black-owned land and significant intergenerational wealth. In Baltimore, its impacts continue to be felt in historically Black neighborhoods where 80% or more of the tax sale foreclosures post 2020 occurred.

The SOS Fund supports this bill and urges a favorable report. We also recommend a critical amendment: granting the Tax Sale Ombudsman the authority to compel the Department of Finance to correct errors in property tax billing, payment application, and the calculation of interest and penalties. Without this authority, residents may remain burdened by inaccurate charges even when attempting to comply with payment plans.

Council Bill 26-0152 is a meaningful step toward a fairer system—one that prioritizes retention, accountability, and housing stability.

**Please contact Nneka Nnamdi, Executive Director, with any questions.
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