

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 19-0126R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Sneed, Henry, Bullock, Dorsey, Stokes, Cohen, Burnett, Pinkett,
Clarke, Middleton, Reisinger, Scott
Introduced and adopted: January 14, 2019

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION CONCERNING

Request for State Action – Support for the Water Taxpayer Protection Act

FOR the purpose of requesting that the Maryland General Assembly pass the Water Taxpayer Protection Act to stop the practice of selling Baltimore City residential property and places of worship to enforce a lien for unpaid charges for water and sewer service.

Recitals

WHEREAS, The Baltimore City Council desires to end the City practice of selling residential property and places of worship to enforce a lien for unpaid charges for water and sewer service;

WHEREAS, Legal advocates estimate that 70 to 80 % of properties sent to tax sale in Baltimore City include unpaid charges for water and sewer service in their outstanding charges;

WHEREAS, Tax sales over unpaid water and sewer bills disproportionately harm lower-income residents and people of color in Baltimore City;

WHEREAS, The Department of Public Works currently lacks a consistent, fair, and neutral process to resolve water billing problems prior to tax sale;

WHEREAS, At least 26 predominantly African American churches in Baltimore were sold at tax sale list from 2015 to 2017, many in part because of unpaid water bills;

WHEREAS, Home equity, which can be a senior's sole savings for retirement, can be lost at tax sale over an unpaid water bill that is as little as \$750 in Baltimore City;

WHEREAS, In December 2017, the Mayor ordered a temporary moratorium on tax sales of owner-occupied properties with water-only liens that removed 3,528 homes from the May 2018 tax sale list;

WHEREAS, The Bureau of Budget and Management Research found that the May 2018 tax sale collected \$606,000 more than the average collected in the last 12 years;

WHEREAS, The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, Maryland's largest water system, cannot use tax sale to collect unpaid water bills by State statute; and

WHEREAS, The Baltimore City Council finds that selling residential properties and places of worship to collect unpaid water bills is inappropriate and unnecessary;

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

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1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
2 Baltimore City Council requests that the Maryland General Assembly pass the Water Taxpayer
3 Protection Act to stop the practice of selling Baltimore City residential property and places of
4 worship to enforce a lien for unpaid charges for water and sewer service.

5 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Baltimore City
6 Delegation to the 2019 Maryland General Assembly, the Baltimore City Director of Government
7 Relations, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the Baltimore City Council.