
CITY OF BALTIMORE

Brandon M. Scott – Mayor
Zeke Cohen – Council President



Office of Council Services

Nancy Mead – Director
100 Holliday Street, Room 415
Baltimore, MD 21202

HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Honorable James Torrence
CHAIR

HEARING NOTES

25-0080 & 25-0141

Title

Hearing Date: 2/24/2026

Hearing Start Time: 5:30 XM

Hearing End Time: :00 XM

Location: Du Burns Council Chamber / Webex

Total Estimated Attendance: 67

	YEA	NAY	ABSENT	ABSTENTION
Final Vote:				

Committee Members in Attendance:

- **Chair** James Torrence
- Jermaine Jones
- Antonio Glover
- **Vice Chair** Odette Ramos
- Zac Blanchard

Additional Councilmembers in Attendance

- Select a Councilmember

MAJOR SPEAKERS

(This is NOT an attendance record.)

- **Odette Ramos**
- **Hilary Ruler**
- **Jason Hessler**
- **Alice Kennedy**
- **Gabe Stuart**
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NOTES

- 25-0080 Hearing
- Chair Torrence calls hearing to order
- Opening comments from Ramos [the bill sponsor on 25-0080](#)

- Ramos reports on amendments – in file
- Agency reports
 - Hilary Ruley – Law dept
 - Notes that amendments changes bills to properties above the liens – which is up to the court on a case-by-case basis
 - Alice Kennedy – DHCD
 - Stands by bill report has not been able to review amendments – still has concerns about the bill achieving what we were aiming for
- 5:43 recess called for 25-0080
- 25-0141
- Chair Torrence calls to order
- Opening Comments from Ramos
- Public Testimony – see sign up sheets in the file
- Agency Reports
 - Law dept – Hilary Ruley
 - Recommending 13 amendments
 - Disclosure requirements may be duplicative
 - Issues with conflict with state laws
 - 1st amendment issues
 - Finance – Gabe S.
 - Implementation is a substantial burden on city – 1.7 million in staff
 - Fees for vacating rental properties
 - DHCD – Alice Kennedy
 - Receivership is the highest form of code enforcement – not about acquisition
 - Still some concerns but appreciate the work with the sponsor
 - Working with law dept
 - Working on the waterbill issue
 - Definition of attempt etc...
 - Working on state legislation to allow city to charge up to 5k in citations
 - HABC – Arleen Sanders
 - MIMA – CR Lima
 - DPW – Christine Griffen
 - BCIT - ?
- Committee questions
 - Torrence rental license – why can't we disclose LLC who pulls permits etc...
 - We should be able to but there is practical difficulties – maybe a technical issue – confirm that it works*
 - *Examine application – require fields be filled, for data validation for responsible party.* Add primary and secondary contacts*
 - Who applies for license, operator should be in the system – but is automatic and may not be being checked
 - Ramos – state licensed inspector – changed to rental inspectors from home why can't we keep bad actors out from inspections
 - The state licensed them for everything – we can't preempt the state
 - Can we create our own licensing system?

- Court would say that is what the state does – this is why most municipalities rely on their own inspectors
- How can we keep out bad actors
 - Have a mechanism to check them – audit?
 - Torrence – can we pursue proactive litigation
 - Yes but you still need private inspectors
- Ramos – are the 11 inspectors in the finance report for the priority inspections or just rental inspectors.
 - No that was a miscommunication – just 3 inspectors needed, cuts nearly 1 million from the burden
 - Finance to submit an updated report
 - Torrence *Historical data on rental licensing inspections from 2019* Check 2019 bill report
 - Why did we remove it
 - What would the cost be today
 - What was the cost then – labor commissioner contracts
 - How many inspectors were included
 - Organization structure
 - Vacating premises – why can't the city relocate people like we do for a fire
 - We don't for a fire and for a big building we would have an astronomical cost
 - Legal issues with forcing people to relocate
 - Auditing – agreed with DHCD on 100-200
- Jones – DOF position is not based on the program –
 - Yes – just based on cost
- *Torrence – how much does the licensing fee bring in, how much would it cost to make administering this program cost neutral? * finance
- Torrence – do we have a requirement for licensing for property managers
 - Ramos – we tried but no the bill was defeated at state every year
 - *advise counsel on property manager licensing requirement – for law dept* both at the state and the city
- Ramos – on water bill – should not be a part of tax sales – landlords often don't pay and it use to move to the tax sales but we need the water bill paid
- Jones – would this help DPW collect water bills
 - It could but we would need dedicated people to administer it so we would need increased salaries
- Closing remarks from Ramos & Torrence
 - Need work session and additional testimony
- Recessed 8:30 PM

FURTHER STUDY REQUESTED

COPY IN SPREADSHEET

SEE FINAL VOTE RECORD IN BILL FILE

Hearing Packet in bill file? -----	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Attendance Sheet in bill file? -----	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Vote Record in bill file? -----	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Agency reports read? -----	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Hearing televised or audio-digitally recorded? -----	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Certification of advertising/posting notices in the bill file? -----	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Evidence of notification to property owners in bill file? -----	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A

Notes by: Tony Leva
Notes Date: 2/24/2026

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