



WRITTEN TESTIMONY
**THE IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY OF
EXPANDING IN REM FORECLOSURE IN BALTIMORE CITY**

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BUILD – a broad-based, non-partisan coalition of 50 religious congregations and non-profits in Baltimore – supports the expansion of in rem foreclosure as proposed in Bill 25-0080.

In 2023, BUILD joined advocates across Baltimore City – including Mayor Scott – to press for legislation in Annapolis to authorize the expansion of In Rem Foreclosure.

We argued then – and we argue now – that this legislation will be a critical tool to fight and address the vacant and abandoned housing crisis in Baltimore City. It does this by expanding the types of properties that the city can acquire using in rem foreclosure.

Here is why this is important.

In February 2023, BUILD released a report, prepared independently by some of the foremost community development experts in the country (czbLLC with the support of Alan Mallach), called *Whole Blocks, Whole City: Reclaiming Vacant Property throughout Baltimore*.

This 113 page report analyzed vacancy, ownership, and tax delinquency on every block in Baltimore City and offered concrete recommendations for action citywide and at the individual block level, depending on the number of vacant properties and structures on that block. The full report is available online.

One of the key recommendations in that report is to expand In Rem Foreclosure so that it can apply to more vacant properties. As the report makes clear:

While there is little doubt that almost any vacant lot created as a result of demolition would meet this definition [under current law and therefore eligible for in rem foreclosure], it is likely that quite a few vacant structures would not...

The “whole blocks” approach – an approach that has been endorsed by the city, the state, the Greater Baltimore Committee, and BUILD – makes clear that we must work to address every vacant property on a given block, while also supporting current homeowners to stay in their homes.

Using a “whole blocks” approach is critical because it creates thriving neighborhoods where people want to move. And every tool in the toolbox that we can create that helps us get there is important to add. This will help us:

- Build wealth for current and future homeowners;

- Rebuild the taxbase for the city and state;
- Reduce violence (as evidence from Baltimore and other cities clearly shows); and
- Increase population

And – perhaps most importantly – now is the time to make this happen.

- The city and state have increased funding for the courts to expand the number of cases the courts can hear;
- The city and state will be investing approximately \$100 million in Baltimore City to address vacancy in the next 12-18 months;
- With the recent news about the speculative and fraudulent DSCR lending in our city, giving the city another tool to acquire and control properties, parceling them out to community-driven developers, can help reduce speculative investment across our city.

We look forward to working with all of you to expand in rem foreclosure and end the legacy of redlining in our city once and for all.