



Odette Ramos

Baltimore City Councilwoman

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100 N. Holliday Street, Room 506

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Testimony REVISED

**22-0250 – The Councilmember Mary Pat Clarke Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act
2nd Reader**

Honorable President Mosby and Distinguished Members of the Baltimore City Council:

The Councilmember Mary Pat Clarke Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act is designed to ensure that tenants in single-family residences have a better opportunity to purchase the property in which they live from the owner when the owner wants to sell it.

When Councilwoman Clarke was a city councilwoman representing Northeast Baltimore, she worked with St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center founders Vinnie Quayle and Frank Fisher on the original Tenant Right of First Refusal legislation. It was the first such legislation in the country giving an opportunity for tenants to purchase the homes in which they live when the owner was ready to sell. In fact, in 1997, I purchase my first house on Guilford Avenue using that same legislation.

Shortly after that, in one of the short times that Councilwoman Clarke was not in office, the legislation was watered down a bit, making it harder for tenants to purchase the homes in which they live. At that time, one exemption was added to the legislation (in the code it is exemption 11). It said that if an owner places the home on the market using a real estate professional, then the tenant can negotiate like any other buyer. While we know of great examples where it does happen, the legislation before you today brings the original level of opportunity back to the policy.

So specifically, this law says that if an owner wants to sell the property, they must first provide an offer to the tenant. The tenant has 14 days to decide to purchase the property and enter into a contract. If after the 14 days the tenant does not send a letter of intent to purchase the property, the owner can sell it to anyone.

If the owner has a third party contract (either by putting it on the market or other negotiations) and the change in the price is 10% or less than the price the tenant was not able to pay, the landlord/owner has to offer the property to the tenant in the same manner as if they didn't put it on the market.

This bill does repeal using the term "tenant right of first refusal" and changes it to Tenant Opportunity to Purchase to reflect what the program has always done – when an owner decides to sell the property, they work with the tenant first and the tenant sends a letter of intent within 14 days of being provided an offer. The tenant then seeks financing and negotiates contract terms. Once a contract is signed, the process is the same as for any other contract agreement.

The legacy of the work of Councilwoman Clarke (and then Council President Mary Pat Clarke) cannot be overstated. This is just one way to honor her, by ensuring the original intent of the Right of First Refusal law is in place- that tenants have a chance to purchase the properties in which they currently live.

I humbly request your support for this landmark legislation.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Odette Ramos", is positioned above the typed name.

Odette Ramos
Baltimore City Councilwoman, District 14