



MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
c/o Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

From: Alice Kennedy, Acting Housing Commissioner



Date: November 10, 2021

Re: City Council Bill 21-0157 Limiting the Range of City-Owned Take-Home Vehicles

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Bill 21-0157 for the purpose of solely allowing a user of a City-owned take-home vehicle to drive the vehicle within the confines of Baltimore City; and authorizing City agencies to adopt implementing rules and regulations.

If enacted, City Council Bill 21-0157 would limit the use of take-home vehicles to the confines of Baltimore City and compel the Commissioner of DHCD and other City agencies, to adopt rules and regulations to regulate the use of any vehicle owned by the City that is authorized for use by a City Employee for commuting and other purposes.

DHCD's Code Enforcement Inspections Division, Emergency Operations Section, utilizes take-home vehicles to conduct their work. The nature of the duties assigned to Emergency Operations Personnel requires flexibility in responding to complaints, 24hrs a day, 7 days a week, on an "on-call" basis. These are often emergency situations such as fires, gas leaks, buildings in danger of collapse, BGE outages with numerous blocks impacted and other time sensitive situations. Emergency Operations Personnel respond to areas throughout the city where people are impacted and the situation is deemed an emergency.

Emergency Operations Officers and Supervisors assist with the relocation of residents across the city in times of need. These agency employees require a wide-ranging use of City owned vehicles and the ability to respond quickly from any location. The Emergency Operations Section currently employs 4 staff with 4 open positions. They utilize 8 City owned vehicles to respond to complaints generated through the 311, 911 and fire communication's systems. DHCD is in the process of filling the remaining Emergency Operations Personnel "Ombudsman" positions as we reshape this section of the division in service to our citizens.

The impact of COVID has also significantly changed the way in which our field teams operate. Previously reporting in person to receive assignments, personnel are now deployed directly to the field from their homes. This has resulted in response time efficiencies and has helped reduce the risk of exposure to COVID by limiting person to person contact.



DHCD opposes this Legislation as drafted but would be in support if the City Administrator's amendments were to be adopted which would make exceptions for employees who are in an on-call status (i.e., Duty Officers) who live within 30 miles of the city, among other exceptions. Take home vehicles are necessary to fully accomplish the duties of the Emergency Operations Section and flexibility is required to recruit candidates to fill vacant positions.

DHCD supports City Council Bill 21-0157 **with amendments.**

AK/sm

cc: Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office of Government Relations