



## MEMORANDUM

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

From: Alice Kennedy, Housing Commissioner

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Date: April 18, 2023

### **Re: City Council Resolution 22-0124R – Informational Hearing - Residential Rental Licensing**

The Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Resolution 22-0124R for the purpose of inviting representatives from the Department of Housing and Community Development and other interested parties to appear before the City Council to discuss the current rental licensing process for residential properties, problems that arise during the process, and improvements that could be made to the current process.

DHCD is committed to enforcing the appropriate licensing and registration requirements for all applicable properties in order to promote the health and safety of our communities throughout the City of Baltimore. A discussion about rental licensing must also include registration, which is required in addition to a rental license.

#### Background

All residential rental units in Baltimore City are required to be registered, inspected, and licensed to ensure that they meet basic safety and maintenance requirements. If a property is not a rental but is non-owner-occupied it still must be registered annually. The [Baltimore City Code, Article 13, Subtitle 4-2](#), requires every owner of a residential non-owner-occupied dwelling unit, "whether occupied or vacant, whether it is producing revenue or not producing revenue, whether habitable or not habitable," to file a registration statement with the Housing Commissioner. An annual registration must be completed for all non-owner-occupied property including vacant lots, vacant buildings and occupied properties such as multifamily dwellings and 1- and 2-family dwellings.

Registration provides valuable contact information to the City of Baltimore. Including a description of the premises by street number, the name, street address, telephone number, and email address of the premises' owner of record and the premises' managing operator. Property owners are required to register their non-owner-occupied properties every year and this information is vital to the agency to ensure the owners of non-owner-occupied properties can be reached and held accountable.

If a property owner wishes to rent out their property it must be **registered and licensed**. Residential non-owner-occupied rental properties must obtain a rental license in addition to

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rental registration. In order to receive a rental license from DHCD the property must first be registered and be inspected by a State Licensed, Baltimore City registered Home Inspector. Registration and Licensing can be done [online](#) or in person at 417 E. Fayette Street, Room 100.

Home Inspectors are selected by the property owner, and they set their own market-rate fees for these inspections. The inspector will be looking for basic life, health, and safety items to insure the property is up to code and safe for the occupants and neighboring residents, including but not limited to electrical, plumbing, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, interior and exterior sanitary conditions, utilities, and chipping or flaking paint. All initial licenses are issued for a two-year period. When it is time for renewal, registrants may be able to obtain a three-year license or be limited to a two- or one-year license based on the maintenance record and violation history.

### Challenges

Some challenges identified by applicants trying to obtain rental licenses include difficulties with the current payment system that came standard with the licensing and registration software. Applicants are able to pay online but must provide banking information. DHCD and BCIT have been working with the vendor to upgrade the system to conform to the City's standard online payment process. Additionally, some applications are delayed because applicants have failed to provide the correct or required information or have not submitted the inspection report within 30 days as required by law.

### Conclusion

DHCD appreciates the opportunity to discuss agency activities around rental licenses with the City Council and partner agencies. We are committed to protecting the residents of Baltimore City and providing outstanding customer service. DHCD is exploring systems changes such as creation of a centralized call center to manage phone traffic. Our overarching goal is to ensure a system that will provide equitable, user-friendly workflow with ease of accessibility. If community members would like to report an unlicensed or unregistered property, we encourage them to contact 311.

DHCD has **no objection** to City Council Resolution 22-0124R.

*AK/sm*

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

*Ms. Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary of the City Council*

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