



BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE INVESTIGATIONS

Mission Statement

On behalf of the Citizens of Baltimore City, the Public Safety Committee will be responsible for matters concerning public safety, including, but not limited to, emergency preparedness, police services, fire/EMS, & their administrative functions.

The Honorable Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer

CHAIR

PUBLIC HEARING

10/16/2025

4:30PM

CLARENCE "DU" BURNS COUNCIL CHAMBERS

25-0017R

Informational Hearing – Water-for-All

City Council Committees

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Danielle McCray - Chair
Isaac “Yitzy” Schleifer – Vice Chair
Sharon Green Middleton
Paris Gray
Antonio Glover

Staff: Paroma Nandi (410-396-0271)

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Zac Blanchard – Vice Chair
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Isaac “Yitzy” Schleifer
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Phylicia Porter
Antonio Glover

Staff: Ethan Navarre (410-396-1266)

HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (HCD)

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Odette Ramos – Vice Chair
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Antonio Glover

Staff: Anthony Leva (410-396-1091)

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Mark Parker
Ryan Dorsey
James Torrence
John Bullock
Odette Ramos

Staff: Marguerite Currin (443-984-3485)

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Antonio Glover – Vice Chair
Ryan Dorsey
Sharon Green Middleton
Paris Gray

Staff: Ethan Navarre (410-396-1266)

LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

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Sharon Green Middleton – Vice Chair
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John Bullock
Phylicia Porter
Zac Blanchard

Staff: Anthony Leva (410-396-1091)

LABOR AND WORKFORCE (LW)

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James Torrence – Vice Chair
Danielle McCray
Ryan Dorsey
Phylicia Porter

Staff: Julianne Jemmott (410-396-1268)

EDUCATION, YOUTH AND OLDER ADULT (EYOA)

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Mark Parker – Vice Chair
Sharon Green Middleton
James Torrence
Zac Blanchard
Jermaine Jones
Odette Ramos

Staff: Julianne Jemmott (410-396-1268)

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 25-0017R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Ramos

Cosponsored by: Councilmembers Parker, Conway, Torrence, Gray, Bullock, Porter, Blanchard,
Jones, Middleton, and President Cohen

Introduced and read first time: April 7, 2025

Assigned to: Committee on Legislative Investigations

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Department of Public Works, Department of Finance,
Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Water-for-All – Program Update**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting the Department of Public Works, the Department of Finance, the
4 Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success, and the Baltimore City Community Action
5 Partnership to provide an update to the City Council on the implementation of the
6 Water-for-All program and the Water Accountability and Equity Act.

7 **Recitals**

8 Knowing that access to clean water is a human right, the City Council passed Council Bill
9 18-0307, the Water Accountability and Equity Act, which was enacted in January of 2020 and
10 created the Water-for-All program, replacing the previous Baltimore H2O program. The
11 enabling legislation was modified on December 7, 2020 with the enactment of Council Bill
12 20-0626.

13 The Water-for-All program provides water discounts to those who need it most.
14 Water-for-All also includes assistance to renters, who have traditionally not been eligible for
15 water discounts. After long delays, the Water-for-All program was implemented in 2023 and
16 continues today.

17 As the Program's 2 year anniversary approaches, the City Council would like the invited City
18 agencies and community partners to evaluate how the program is working and provide the
19 following information:

- 20 (1) the number of residents enrolled in the program;
- 21 (2) the difference between the number of residents enrolled in Water-for-All and
22 Baltimore H2O;
- 23 (3) the number of homeowners and the number of renters enrolled in the program;
- 24 (4) a breakdown of the demographics and income levels of the program participants;

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Council Bill 25-0017R

1 (5) an explanation for why the discounts are provided only once a year, rather than
2 distributed throughout the year;

3 (6) recommendations for how the program can be improved;

4 (7) current efforts underway to encourage more eligible residents to enroll;

5 (8) a comparison of Water-for-All's discounts with Baltimore H2O's discounts;

6 (9) an analysis of the experiences of residents enrolled in the program who pay their bills
7 versus those who cannot; and

8 (10) any additional questions the Council may ask before and during the hearing.

9 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the City
10 Council invites the Department of Public Works, the Department of Finance, the Mayor's Office
11 of Children and Family Success, and the Baltimore City Community Action Partnership to
12 provide an update to the City Council on the implementation of the Water-for-All program and
13 the Water Accountability and Equity Act.

14 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Director of the
15 Department of Public Works, the Director of the Department of Finance, the Director of the
16 Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success, the Board of Directors of the Baltimore City
17 Community Action Partnership, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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

COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE INVESTIGATIONS

The Honorable Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer
CHAIR

Resolution Hearing

25-0017R

Informational Hearing – Water-for-All

For the purpose of inviting the Department of Public Works, the Department of Finance, the Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success, and the Baltimore City Community Action Partnership to provide an update to the City Council on the implementation of the Water-for-All program and the Water Accountability and Equity Act.

BACKGROUND

Signed into law in early-2020, the Water Accountability and Equity Act (hereinafter, the "Act") created a new water affordability program, Water-for-All (hereinafter, the "Program"), and created a new Office of Water-Customer Advocacy and Appeals (hereinafter, the "Office") within the Department of Public Works (DPW), through which city residents may dispute billing discrepancies and eligibility for the Program.

The Program entitles certain households to a water bill credit, either applied directly to a customer's water bill or sent by check, based on the following income tiers: 0-50 percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines – one percent of income; 50-100 percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines – two percent of income; 100-200 percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines – 3 percent of income.

In addition to homeowners, the program is also available to tenants eligible under the same income thresholds. The Act also made changes to City residential lease requirements to strengthen tenants' access to information related to their payment of water and/or wastewater fees, regardless of whether those fees are included as part of a residential lease agreement or paid separately by the tenant.

Should any tenant or property owner encounter issues with their water and/or wastewater bill or determinations related to their eligibility under the Program, they may dispute those determinations through the Office and, if any dispute remains following a decision by the Office, customers can file a further appeal for review by the Environmental Control Board. Subsequently, any decision made on appeal is required to be reviewed, approved, and/or modified by the Director of DPW. At that point, should a customer continue to disagree with the decision, they may seek judicial review.¹

FISCAL NOTE

As this resolution invites City agencies to report on the implementation of the Act and Program it, if enacted, would have no significant fiscal impact.

REPORTING AGENCIES

- Department of Public Works
- Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success
- Department of Finance
- Baltimore City Community Action Partnership

CITATIONS

¹ <https://baltimore.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3769175&GUID=4A3F24AF-7CC7-442B-86C5-B01AF0A148F7>

Analysis by: Ethan Navarre
Analysis Date: 8/21/2025

Direct Inquiries to: ethan.navarre@baltimorecity.gov

BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL



COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE INVESTIGATIONS

25-0017R

Informational Hearing – Water-for-All

Agency Reports



WATER4ALL BALTIMORE



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. | Program Overview & Successes
2. | Current Activities
3. | The Data
4. | Next Steps



Brandon M. Scott
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PROGRAM OVERVIEW & SUCCESSES



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Overview of Water4All

- Water affordability program designed to provide equitable access to water
- Eligible and qualified City residents receive a monthly discount applied to their bill
- Tenants on a master meter receive a check via Workday
- Calculating annual household discount

$C = B - I \times A$	
C	Credit Amount
B	Consumption Costs & Fees
I	Income
A	Affordability Threshold

- 1% for **up to 50%** of FPL
- 2% for **greater than 50% and up to 100%** of FPL
- 3% for **greater than 100% and less than 200%** FPL



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Program Successes

- Water4All workgroup is a **multi-agency collaboration**
 - DPW Utility Policy Team and WACA
 - MOCFS & Data Team
 - BCIT
 - Finance
 - The Comptroller's Office
 - The group has implemented several strategies and initiatives to strengthen the program
- **Applying monthly credits** has streamlined the process and ensured program compliance
- **An HABC mass enrollment pilot** successfully enrolled 31 tenants, resulting in over **\$40,000** in credits



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Program Successes

- Application platform is now solely managed by City agencies
 - **Checks** are now **processed via Workday**
 - **184 checks totaling \$205,724** have been sent for FY'25 and FY'26 vs. **\$1,278,586 through the vendor for** FY'22, FY'23, and FY'24.
 - Shift provided a cost avoidance of **~\$700k** in potential vendor costs
- **99%** of the credits are **immediately placed** on customer bills
 - Master meter tenants receive live checks from Workday
- Our internal audit process has resulted in **419 audits** performed with a cost avoidance of approximately \$2,045,932



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CURRENT ACTIVITIES



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OPERATIONS

- Application Processing Workflow (i.e., mail, in person, & the portal)
- **ALL** MOCFS locations are paperless
- QR codes are used for outreach and community events
- Paper applications are date-stamped to ensure compliance with the 90-day turnaround
- Average processing time: ~23 days (input, review, and approval)



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OPERATIONS

System Enhancement

- Alert sent if a credit is issued for an application address < 1 year
- Program Admin reviews the application
- Application is declined if determined to be a duplicate
- Associates are only able to enter applications
- Managers able to approve <\$1,700
- When RFI need is met, an alert is received to advise that this step has been completed



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MARKETING EFFORTS

- Voice dialer to reach out to customers
- Letters to customers about the program
- Emails to customers to renew
- Promote at community events with liaisons
- Signage at CAP Centers



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THE DATA

** as of September 30, 2025*



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HOUSEHOLD SIZE – ALL APPLICANTS

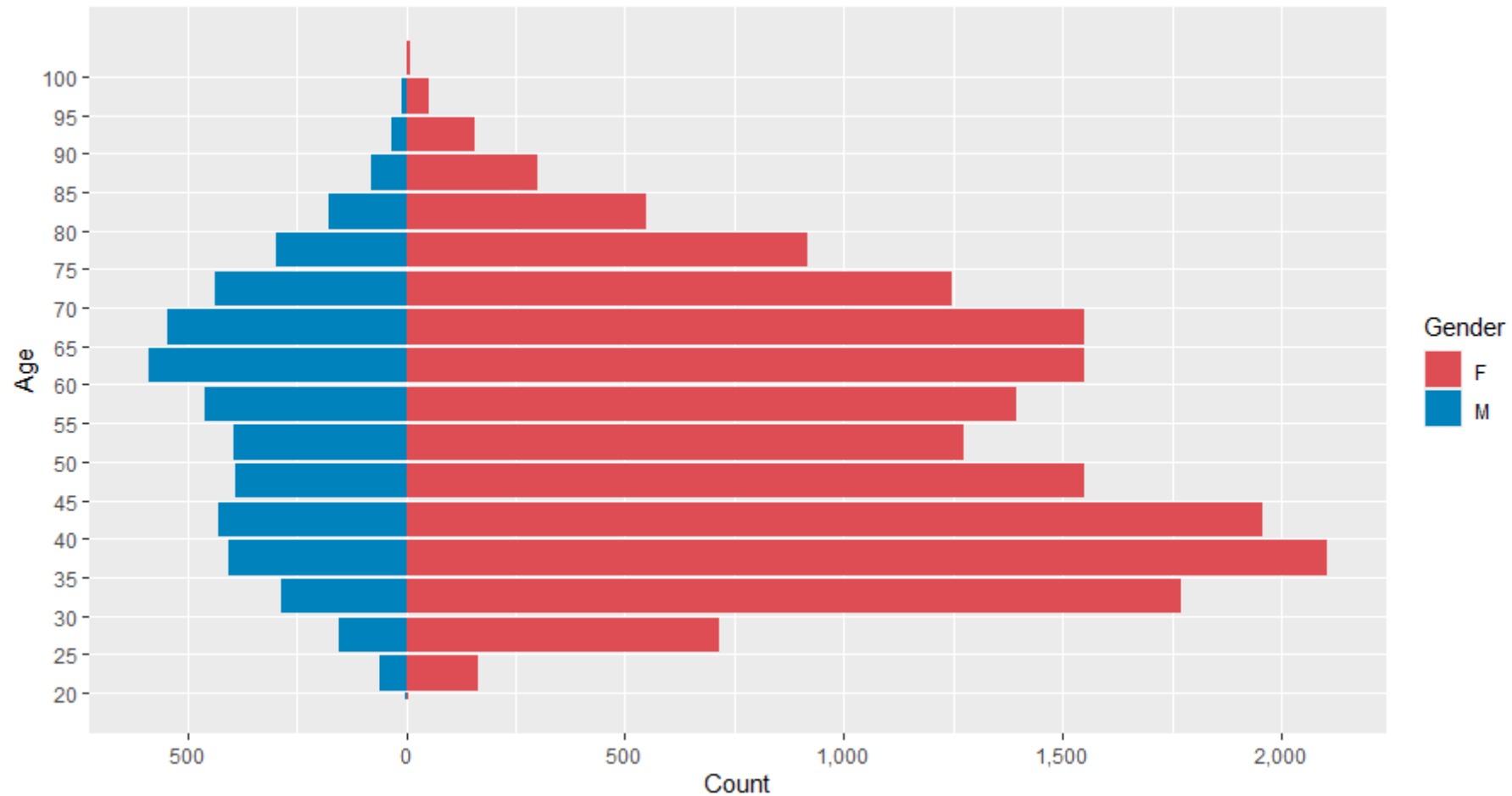
Fiscal Year	Total Applications	Median Income	Median Household Size
FY '22	2,482	\$12,168	2
FY '23	6,517	\$12,456	1
FY '24	4,953	\$13,248	2
FY '25	5,744	\$14,796	2
FY '26 *	2,377	\$13,929	2
Total	20,073	\$13,357	2

** as of September 30, 2025 | FY'26 is in progress*



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HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD AGE/GENDER

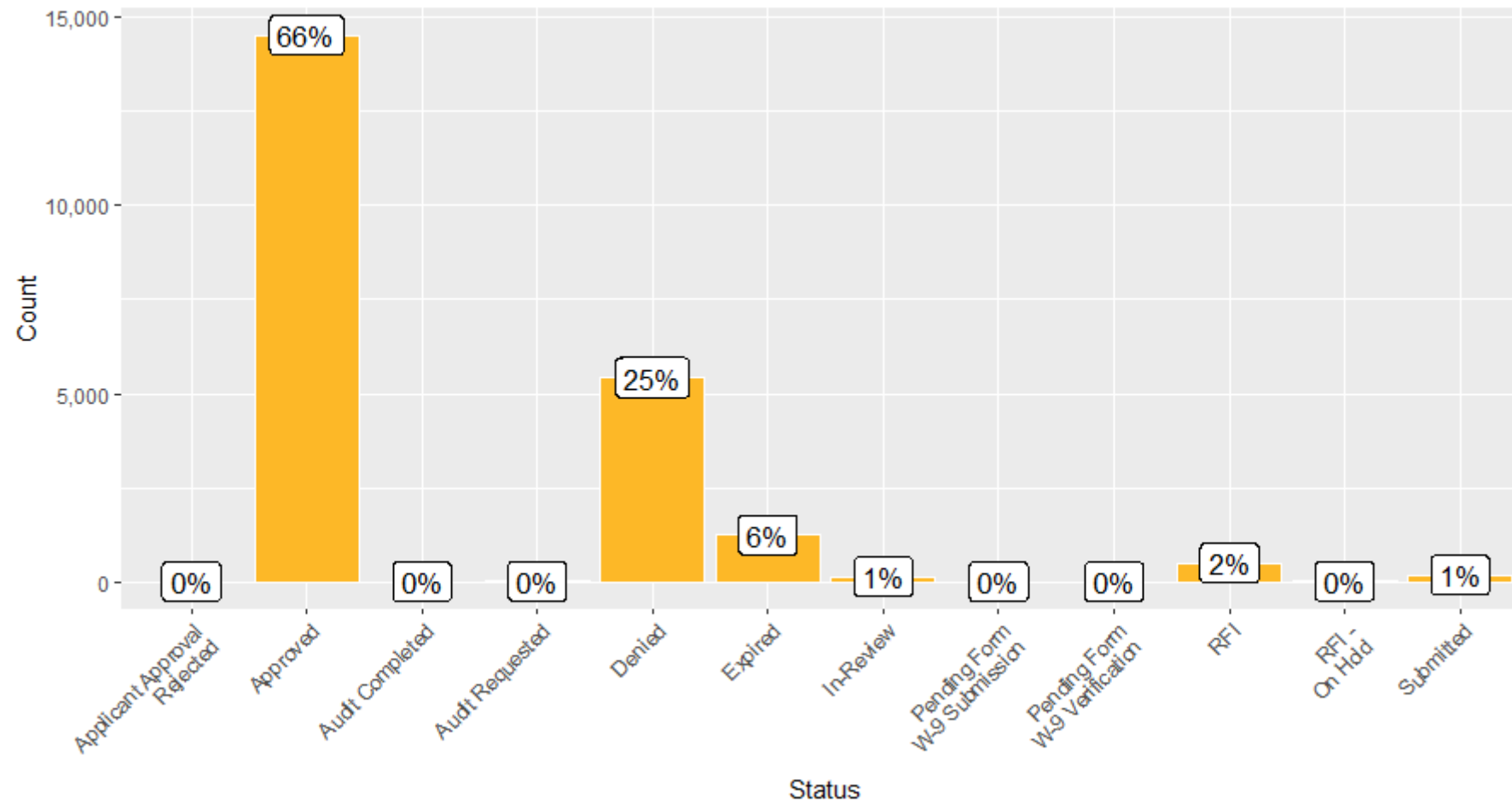


* as of September 30, 2025



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ALL APPLICATIONS BY STATUS

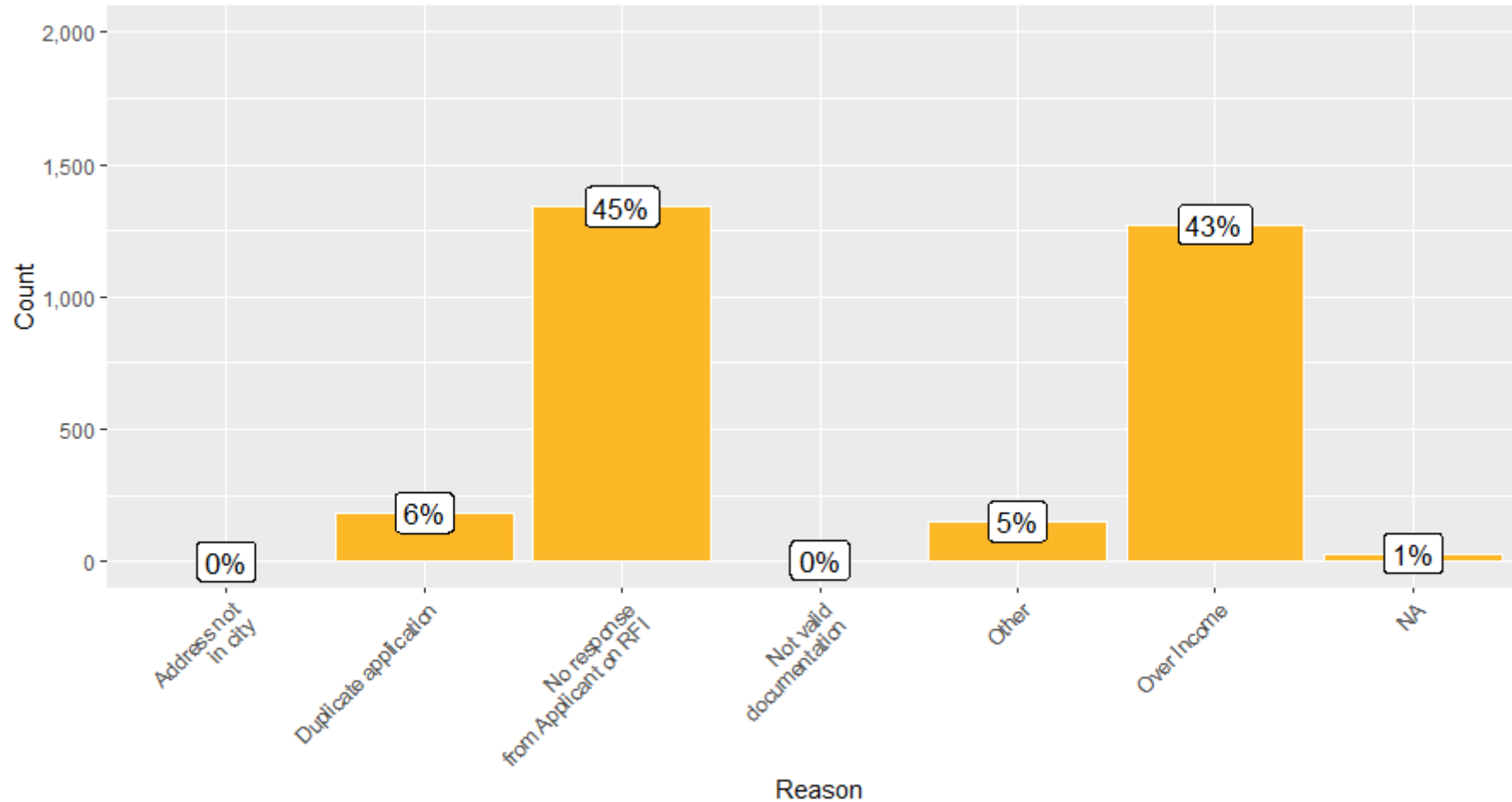


* as of September 30, 2025



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DENIALS – HOMEOWNERS



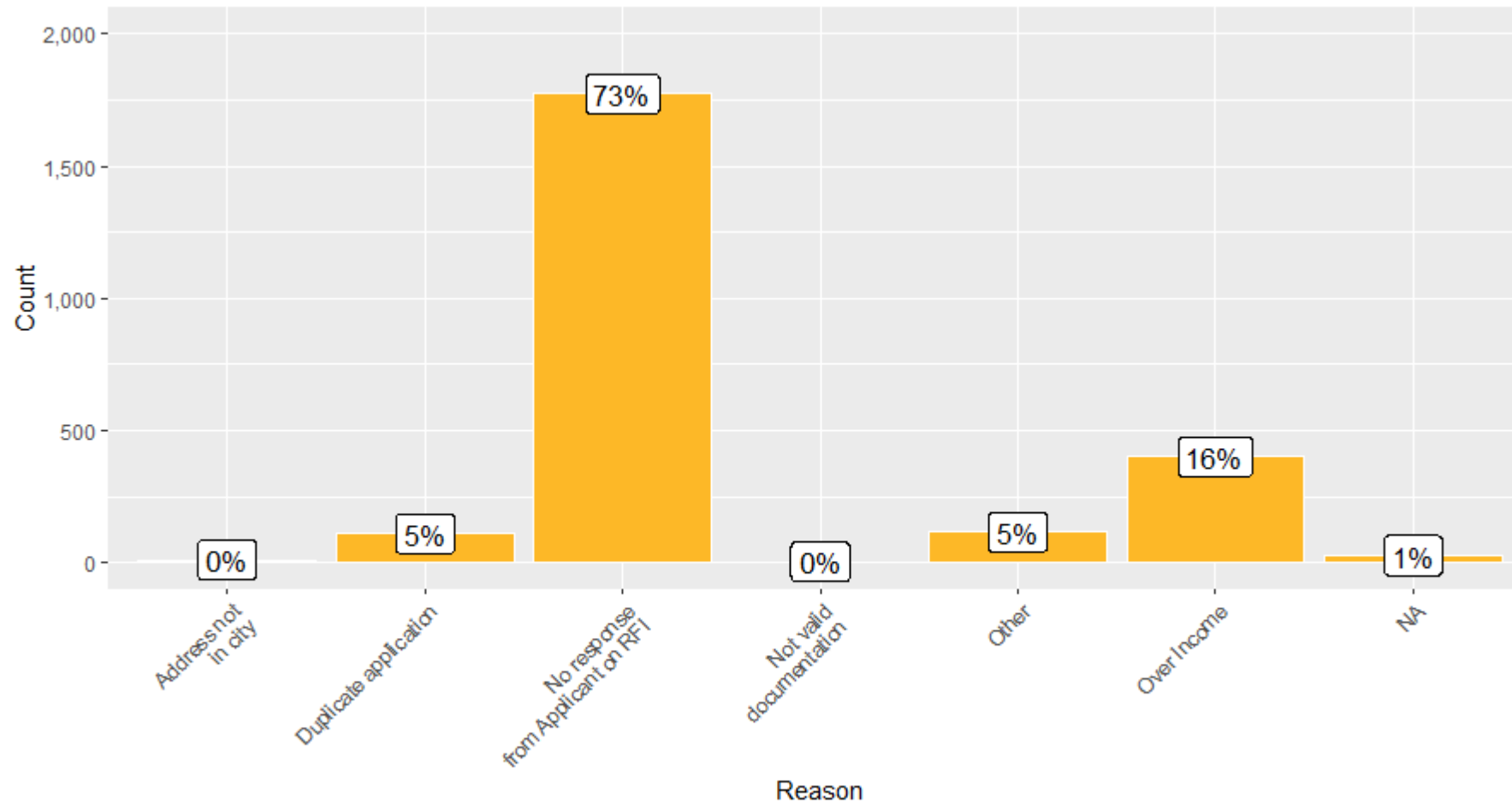
2,985 homeowner applications (22%) have been denied

* as of September 30, 2025



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DENIALS – TENANTS



2,442 tenant applications (29%) have been denied

* as of September 30, 2025



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APPROVED APPLICATIONS

Year	Total Applications			Total Approved			Total
	Tenant	Homeowners	Total	Tenants	Homeowners	Total	Discounts
FY'22	1,083	1,399	2,482	530	1,069	1,599	\$1,552,756
FY'23	2,146	4,371	6,517	1,010	3,350	4,360	\$3,957,583
FY'24	1,928	3,025	4,953	1,101	2,288	3,389	\$3,307,313
FY'25	2,359	3,385	5,744	1,501	2,363	3,864	\$3,790,824
FY'26 *	912	1,465	2,377	425	826	1,251	\$1,196,029
TOTAL	8,428	13,645	22,073	4,567	9,896	14,463	\$13,804,506

NOTE

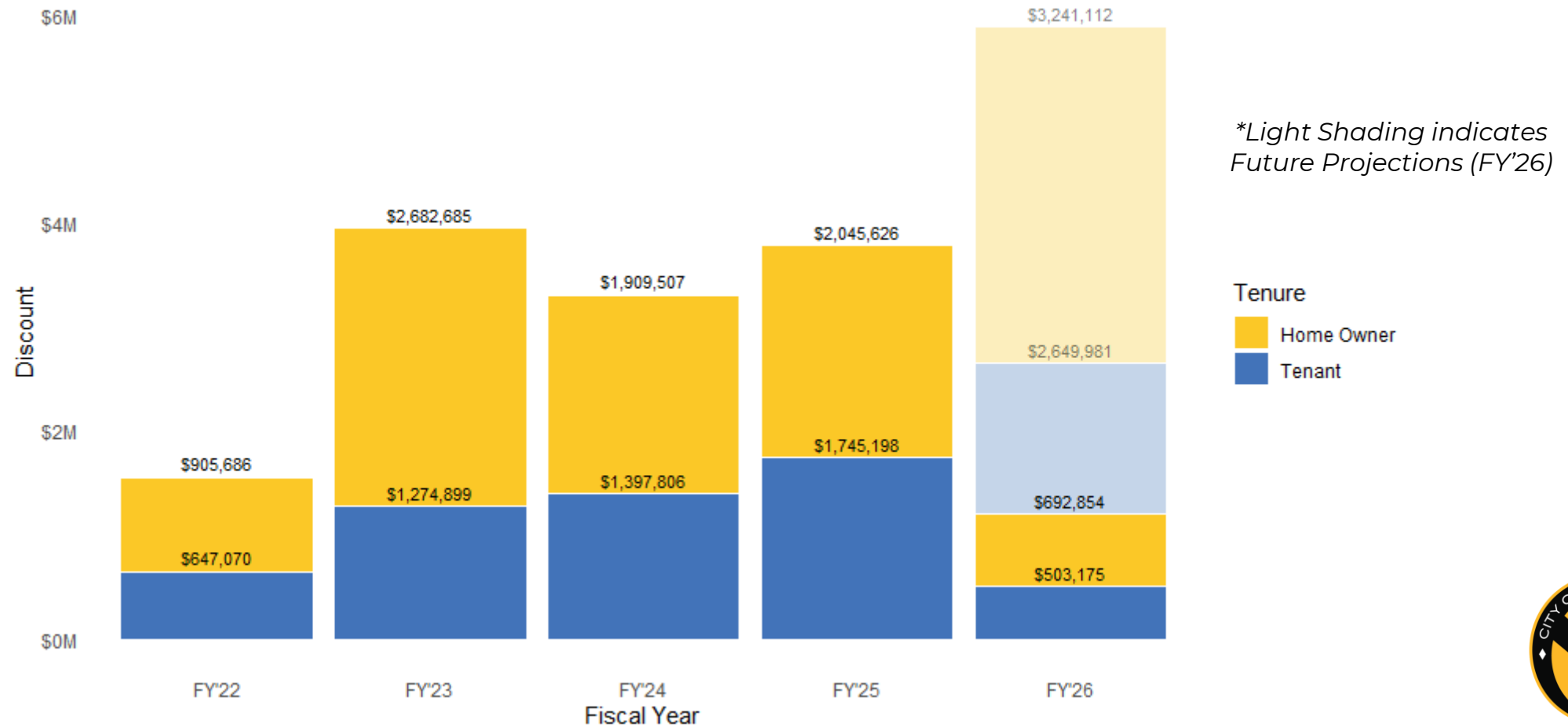
- Homeowners (68%) have received \$8,236,358 (60%) of the discounts
- Tenants (32%) have received \$5,568,148 (40%) of the discounts

** as of September 30, 2025 | FY'26 is in progress*



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CREDITS BY CUSTOMER TYPE



* as of September 30, 2025 | FY'26 is in progress



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BH20 v. WATER4ALL CREDITS

	BH20			Water4All		
Year	Count	Median	Total	Count	Median	Total
FY'19	7,752	\$69.25	\$697,722			
FY'20	9,396	\$318.69	\$3,625,606			
FY'21	9,734	\$357.90	\$4,293,764			
FY'22	9,297	\$262.67	\$3,144,922	1,599	\$824.22	\$1,552,756
FY'23	1	\$11.70	\$11.70	4,360	\$757.72	\$3,957,583
FY'24				3,389	\$854.11	\$3,307,313
FY'25				3,864	\$878.80	\$3,790,824
FY'26 *				1,251	\$902.07	\$1,196,029
TOTAL	36,191	\$258.50	\$11,762,025	14,463	\$832.11	\$13,804,506

NOTE: BH20 was an auto-applied flat rate; Water4All requires a review of income

* as of September 30, 2025 | FY'26 is in progress



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BH20 v. WATER4ALL DIFFERENCES

BH20

- Equality-focused
- 175% of FPL
- Automatic enrollment and re-enrollment
- Flat rate

WATER4ALL

- Equity-focused
- 200% of FPL
- Requires customer application
- Income-based
- Requires reapplication

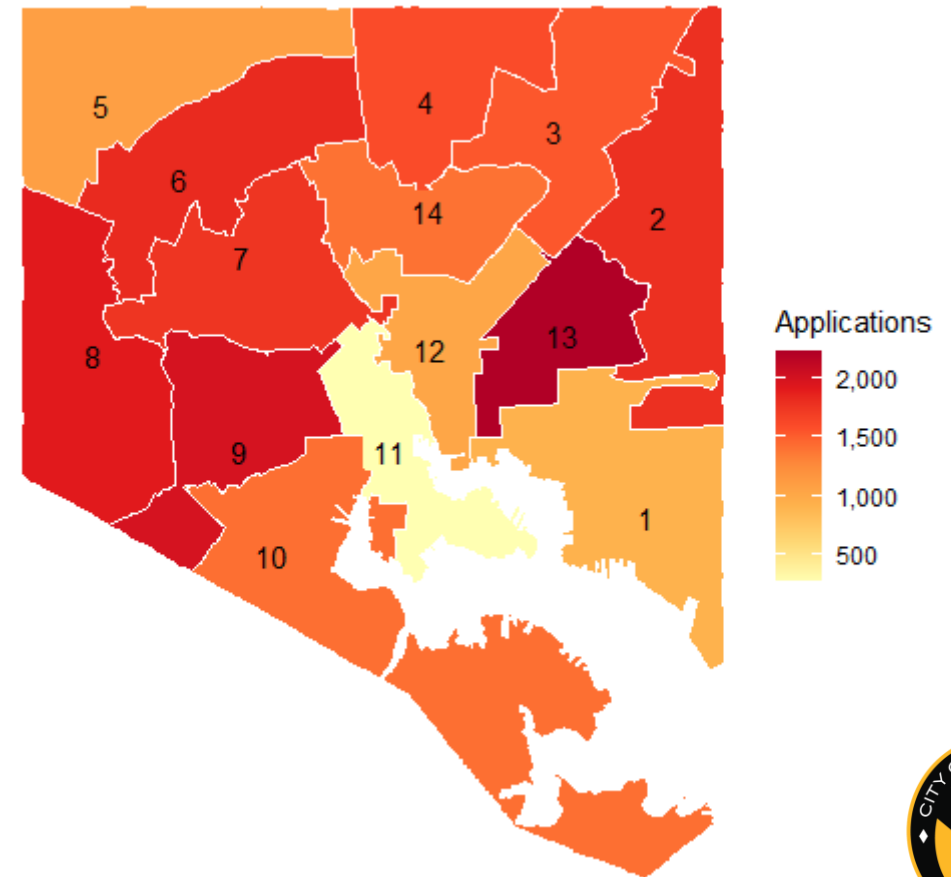
** FPL = Federal Poverty Level*



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APPLICATIONS BY COUNCIL DISTRICT

District	Submitted	Approved	Discounts
13	2,230	1,454	\$1,460,114
9	1,998	1,319	\$1,268,496
6	1,832	1,268	\$1,251,928
7	1,766	1,214	\$1,199,474
8	1,916	1,272	\$1,188,759
2	1,795	1,197	\$1,145,601
4	1,601	1,092	\$1,035,309
3	1,542	1,089	\$1,002,897
14	1,412	940	\$836,959
10	1,427	902	\$802,003
5	1,100	751	\$707,017
12	1,041	678	\$669,912
1	928	625	\$585,320
11	283	160	\$168,912



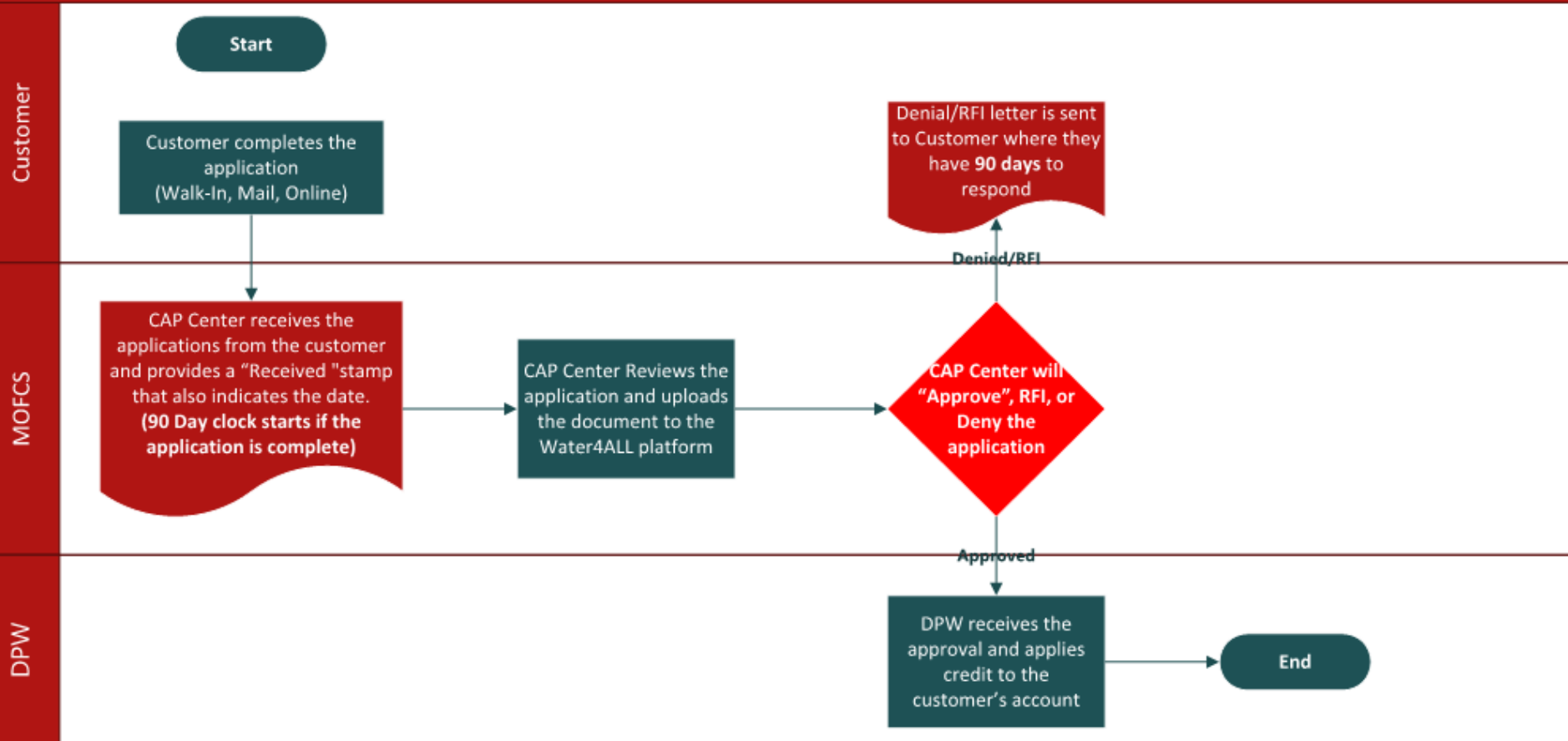
* as of September 30, 2025



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APPLICATION PROCESS

Water 4ALL Application Submission Process



Legend

◆ = Decision

■ = Step in the process

▭ = Documentation

Acronyms

MOFCS - Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success

CSSD - Customer Support and Services Division

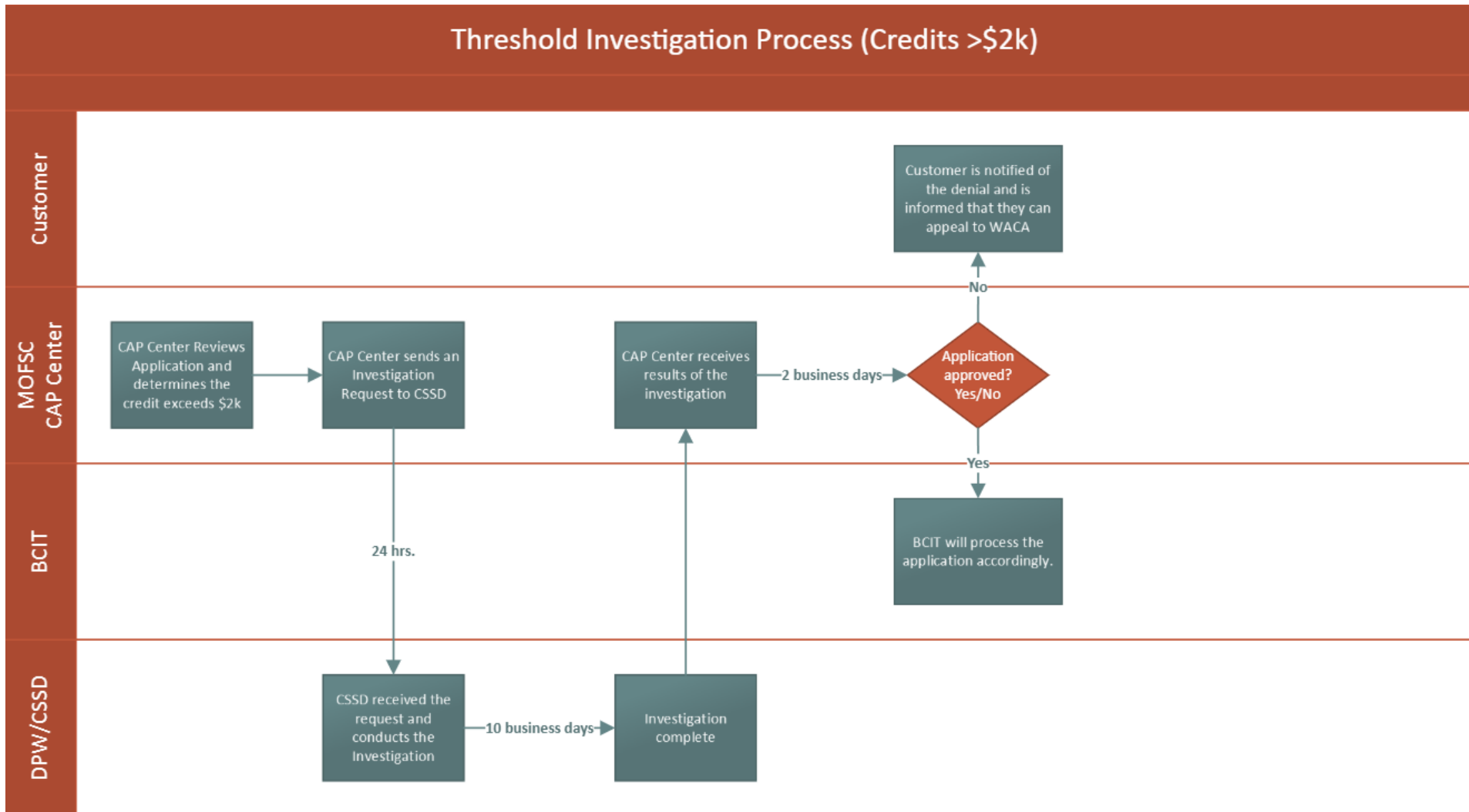
DPW - Department of Public Works



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Application Audit Process

Threshold Investigation Process (Credits >\$2k)



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NEXT STEPS



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Tiered Credit Program (Proposed)

- **GOAL:** Streamline the Water4All application processes for eligible populations
- **ASSUMPTION:** The application would ask guiding questions to determine whether the respondent qualifies for the corresponding tier.
- **RATIONALE:** The Water4All program is designed to ensure affordability and equity in water billing by providing targeted financial credits to eligible residents of Baltimore City.
 - Implementing a tiered credit structure will simplify enrollment and align with federal poverty guidelines and legislative mandates under the Code of Baltimore Art. 24, §§ 2-6 through 2-15.



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Tiered Credit Program (Proposed)

- **Tier 1**
 - Annual Older Adult SSI-based Credit
- **Tier 2**
 - Annual Public Benefit-based Credit
- **Tier 3**
 - Annual Income-based Credit



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Next Steps

Enhance platform functionality

- **Mass enrollment** features
- **Streamlined** application
- Enhanced data dashboard
- Improve RFI notifications
- Feature to upload paper applications

Evaluate the efficacy of
**qualifications increase
beyond 200% FPL**

Expand outreach and
marketing

**Review existing
policies** to ensure
program
administration remains
efficient, effective

**Draft regulations and
new strategies**



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QUESTIONS

