



HEARING NOTES

Bill: 22-0128R

Investigational Hearing - Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Committee: Economic and Community Development

Chaired By: Councilwoman Sharon Green Middleton

Hearing Date: January 24, 20223

Time (Beginning): 3:25: PM

Time (Ending): 4:15 PM

Location: City Hall; Clarence "Du" Burns Chambers and WEBEX

Total Attendance: ~20

Committee Members in Attendance:

John Bullock Mark Conway Ryan Dorsey Antonio Glover Robert Stokes Odette Ramos

Bill Synopsis in the file?..... yes no n/a

Attendance sheet in the file? yes no n/a

Agency reports read? yes no n/a

Video or audio-digitally recorded? yes no n/a

Certification of advertising/posting notices in the file? yes no n/a

Evidence of notification to property owners? yes no n/a

Final vote taken at this hearing? yes no n/a

Motioned by: Councilmember

Seconded by: Councilmember

Final Vote:

Major Speakers

(This is not an attendance record.)

- Councilmember Kristerfer Burnett, Sponsor
- Sam Cogen, Sheriff

- Hilary Ruley Law Department
 - Debra Brooks, Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success (MOCFS)
 - Nicole Hart, Deputy Commissioner, DHCD
 - Angela Whitaker, Director, Baltimore City Community Action Partnership (BCAP)
 - Katherine Howard, General Counsel, Regional Management
 - Donald Martin, Regional Management
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Major Issues Discussed

1. Councilmember Middleton opened the meeting, introduced committee members and read the bill into the record.
2. Councilmember Burnett commented about the purpose of the bill. He wanted to provide an update on successes and challenges regarding the expenditure of local, state and federal funds for the rental assistance program.
3. Councilmember Stokes indicated that he found in some cases landlords were not completing paperwork needed to complete a tenant's application process for rental assistance.
4. Debra Brooks testified in response to Councilmember Stokes stating that program changes have been put in place to help curtail evictions due to non-payment. Direct to tenant payments have been implemented as well as relocation and security deposit assistance payments. MOCFS is working directly with landlords to prevent evictions.
5. The committee discussed:
 - The number of evictions that have been avoided
 - As of December 31, 2022 the program has assisted over 12,000 households in avoiding evictions
 - Processed over 46,000 applications
 - Disbursed \$75.2 million to support families
 - Disbursements are at a rate of \$650,000 weekly to support families designated for eviction
 - Ways to get direct payments to tenants and landlords
 - The priority is to get payment directly to landlord
 - Some landlords are slow to respond or do not want to participate in the program
 - The program reaches out via various means; if unsuccessful then the program proceeds with direct payment based on federal guideline which includes obtaining required documents
 - Tenants are not policed, but there is follow-up to assure landlords have received funds and tenants has been relieved from eviction
 - Waiting List / Backlog
 - There is a waiting list
 - Barrier – Baltimore has a high need for rental assistance funding
 - There is a prioritization of need

- Mandated prioritization is based on whether a tenant faces imminent eviction or whether persons in the household have been unemployed for more than 90 days
 - Processing time is about 30 days for those of high priority
 - Applicants often file multiple applications
 - Applicants are contacted on a regular basis, especially within the program's portal
- Requirements to get direct payments to tenants
- Applications
 - There are 16,000 applications under review and in various stages of the review process
 - Applications move through the process based on submission and access to certain documents and actions
 - The system does not have an application processing alert system. Application date is used as a priority.
- Funding
 - Federal funding has been used and most will be spent by mid-March
 - Support is needed for the program
 - The need for support and more funding is great
 - The Program is reaching out to other agencies and jurisdictions as well as the State and federal government for additional funding

6. BCAP was commended for preventing evictions.

7. Sam Cogen testified about his office executing eviction notices. The goal is to work collaboratively with other agencies to improve awareness regarding the scheduling of evictions and other related matters to increase the effectiveness of programs. Information is now being shared with tenants and landlords.

8. The committee opened the hearing for public testimony.

9. Katherine Howard testified that not all landlords reject participation in the program. Prioritization of applications is important. Her organization works with BCAP and the court system. She needed more insight regarding the impact that a "stay on eviction" from a landlord may have on applicants. Should landlords guide the applicant to apply under the imminent priority criteria so that they can be processed as a high priority or should landlords assist the applicant by allowing a "stay of the eviction" process. She does not want to create a problem for the applicant seeking to obtain funds.

10. Donald Martin testified as to why his organization does not participate in the program. He indicated that some tenants may have already received an allotment or a tenant may be in substantial breach of lease. When grants are filed all court orders must be dissolved.

11. The program will provide follow-up information.

12. The hearing was recessed.

Further Study

Was further study requested?

Yes No

If yes, describe. The committee would like the program to provide information about:

- the guidelines for applying for and receiving rental assistance payments
- BCAP will follow-up with information about the average wait time, for processing applications and receipt of payments.
- guidelines for applying for energy assistance (one time per year).

Committee Vote:

Sharon Green Middleton, Chair:.....

John Bullock:

Mark Conway:

Ryan Dorsey:

Antonio Glover:.....

Odette Ramos:

Robert Stokes:.....

Jennifer L. Coates, Committee Staff

Date: January 24, 2023

cc: Bill File
OCS Chrono File