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January 19, 2023

Councilwoman Sharon Green Middleton
Chair, City Council Economic and Development Committee
City Hall, 100 North Holiday Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Councilwoman Middleton and members of the committee,

Please find this letter in support of Code Enforcement for Non-Residential Property - Council Bill 22-0135R.

We support this legislation to create code enforcement similar to code enforcement in residential areas for commercial areas. It would also create a registration process similar to residential properties. Too many unoccupied commercial properties are either left to deteriorate or speculators buy and hold properties that deter growth for business, other commercial property owners and neighborhoods. The speculators gain tax benefits, while others are negatively impacted. Without code enforcement tools, legal processes such as receivership is not possible.

Pigtown Main Street works daily to retain and attract businesses to the areas we serve. We know firsthand that the majority of commercial property owners DO work to lease and maintain their properties. There are reasons that filling a commercial space sometimes is not possible such as the market or the cost of upgrades. The code enforcement regulations and a registration process that can result from this legislation is NOT to harm these owners. It is the commercial property owners who do none of these actions that are lowering other properties value and causing negative impact to commercial corridors and neighborhoods.

Through our partnerships with other accredited Main Street organizations throughout the country, we have learned that other jurisdictions have had success of this type of legislation. As noted above, there are no tools for deteriorating unoccupied commercial properties. There are no tools for speculators and absentee property owners who buy and hold properties for years and left to deteriorate and/or create a hole in a commercial block/districts.

Please support Code Enforcement for Non-Residential Property - Council Bill 22-0135R. Thank you very much for your attention to this important situation in our neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kimberly Lane", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kimberly Lane, Executive Director

