

Hello,

Please find my testimony in support of Councilwoman Porter's Bill 22-0135R below.

Best,

Sarah Sullivan

When I moved to Baltimore in 2006, I was immediately struck by the things that this City has that other cities don't have. I found that real people who lived here had built businesses and organizations out of crazy ideas that were able to thrive in a City that was big enough to support real projects, but tight-knit enough for normal people to succeed. I would go into a restaurant and find the owners, who lived here in the City, yucking it up with patrons or waiting tables. The arts scene was diverse and integrated, and projects that could only be joked about in other cities were not just being made, but thriving and bringing new life to Baltimore's old industrial architecture.

Now that I have run a small business (the Mobtown Ballroom) in Baltimore City for nearly 12 years, I'm keenly aware of the mounting challenges that face Baltimore City's established and prospective small business owners. As a City, we claim to value minority leadership and the quirky personalities that our people and business bring to Baltimore neighborhoods. Those neighborhoods make Baltimore what it is; while other cities have been taken over by outside spectators, chain establishments, and hollow recreations of the same hyper-trendy concepts, Baltimore has loudly stayed Baltimore.

That's changing quickly. Every time we take an economic hit, outside opportunists come in, buy up our cool old buildings, and then either sit on them while they rot, or drywall them out of a personality and wait for an imaginary highest bidder. It's become nearly impossible for small businesses to find buildings that is both available and not surrounded by vacant properties (that at best simply don't attract people, and at worst make the block scary or unsafe). Baltimore City has talent, drive, and ideas; it should be out right to use the buildings.

I implore our representatives to pass Council Bill 22-0135R and continue the fight to keep Baltimore a place where its residents can build the kind of City they want to live in.