



BALTIMORE CITY
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MEMORANDUM

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

From: Michael Braverman, Housing Commissioner *Nadya Morgan* for

Date: March 16, 2020

Re: **City Council Bill 19-0429 Vacant Structures - Posting Owner Information**

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Bill 19-0429 for the purpose of requiring that owners of certain vacant structures to conspicuously post on the exterior of the structure certain information regarding the ownership of the structure; requiring that the sign meet certain specifications; specifying when signs must be posted; dedicating a certain portion of the fine proceeds to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund; conforming related provisions; and providing for a special effective date.

If enacted, the legislation as written, requires owners of vacant buildings to post signage on their buildings, including their contact information, so residents can help hold them accountable. DHCD believes that when communities work with us to help bring about compliance there is a higher yield in the reduction of blight. However, DHCD cannot support the Bill as written and has worked with the bill's sponsor to discuss the best way to provide that information and develop amendments to achieve the intent of the legislation.

The amendments as drafted place the responsibility for the posting requirement on DHCD, removes the confidentiality requirement of the registration statement, modifies the contents of the sign to contain information on how to access the information set forth in the registration statement and provides a provision for accounting for changes of ownership or contact information. The proposed amendments will also delete the fine proceeds and procedures for calculating fines because DHCD will be responsible for doing the posting.

The estimated fiscal impact of this Bill is \$39,634.00 in year one for supplies, printing costs and Code Enforcement Staff time and \$13,888.89 in subsequent years. It is anticipated that 16,000 signs will be posted in year one during inspectors regularly scheduled inspections. In subsequent years DHCD will post as necessary when new vacants occur or damaged signs are replaced.

As the fiscal impact of implementing this legislation will be borne entirely upon the agency. DHCD is opposed to the amendment that will add an annual reporting requirement. We do not believe that this amendment is necessary because we already report the number of vacant properties on a yearly basis. We believe that this amendment will put an additional burden on our staff.

DHCD has been generally acknowledged as a national leader in the work of code enforcement and the efficient, effective and data-driven delivery of local government services. DHCD has been on the forefront of information of sharing. Ownership data and much more is currently publicly available on the city's website

(<http://cels.baltimorehousing.org/codemap/codeMapexternal.html>).

DHCD supports the passage of City Council Bill 19-0383 with amendments.

MB:sm

cc: Mr. Blendy, Nicholas, *Mayor's Office of Government Relations*