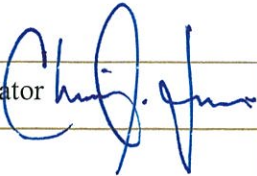



FROM	NAME & TITLE	Christopher Shorter, City Administrator 	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Office of the Mayor 100 N. Holliday Street, Room Baltimore, MD 21202		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill # 21-0099 Study and Report – Tax Sale Accounting		

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

DATE: September 28, 2021

Position: Support

The City Administrators Office (CAO) is herein reporting on City Council Bill 21-0099 Study and Report – Tax Sale Accounting. This bill requires the Department of Finance and the Office of the City Administrator to submit a report that outlines the steps that will be taken to address issues with the accounting system that often prevents residents from paying their property taxes correctly, as well as problems experienced with the tax lien sale system. The bill requests that these issues are resolved before the start of the next tax sale.

Background

The faults of the tax sale system are of high priority both to the Office of the Administrator and Mayor Brandon Scott. The City Administrator has directed the Baltimore City Office of Information Technology to investigate solutions to the issues outlined in Council Bill #21-0099. It is additionally of vital importance to take a holistic approach to solving the systemic issues of the tax lien sale. To this end, the Office of the City Administrator supports the dedication of the Department of Finance to develop strategies to resolve challenges and limitations that exist in the billing, payment, and accounting systems in coordination with the Baltimore City Office of Information Technology. This includes implementing adjustments and upgrades to the mainframe, accounting, and tax sale systems. The Office of the City Administrator additionally supports the Department of Finance and BCIT in working toward the consolidation of systems to optimize customer service by providing just one place where taxpayers are able to see bills and liens. BCIT is expected to begin implementation of a new Payment system December 2021 and will begin the replacement of tax/property systems by the third quarter of 2022. Furthermore, the Office of the City Administrator is dedicated to support the work of the Department of Finance in developing strategies for increasing the promotion of the Homeowners’ Tax Credit and other programs designed to assist City residents.

Conclusions:

Mayor Brandon Scott has made a commitment to ensuring a fair and equitable process the sale of liens. The Administration has made a forceful commitment that Tax Sale would be a priority of this Administration by: removing hundreds of homes from the Fiscal Year 2021 Tax Sale, creating a committee made up of advocates, industry experts, and City Agency Staff, as well as identifying funding sources to purchase owner-occupied liens from the lien purchasers. More broadly, the Chief Administrative Officer has been working across City government to improve technology and process of public facing services. With that, the City Administrator welcomes clarity and transparency in the process and plans to move forward with changes to the system in collaboration with the Department of Finance, BCIT, and other stakeholders.