



BRANDON M. SCOTT  
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations  
88 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

**HB 523**

February 17, 2021

**TO:** Members of the House Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations

**RE:** HOUSE BILL 523 – Baltimore City – Repossession for Failure to Pay Rent –  
Registration and License Information

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 523.

HB 523 amends the Public Local Laws of Baltimore City to prohibit a landlord who has failed to properly register their property in accordance with the requirements of the City of Baltimore's rental property licensure requirements from using the resources of the District Court system and the Sheriff of Baltimore to evict a tenant.

In 2018, the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore enacted an ordinance<sup>1</sup> that required all rental properties to register with the City's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) beginning on January 1, 2019. The requirements are two-fold: (1) register with HCD via an online portal; and (2) be inspected by a Maryland-licensed, Baltimore City-registered home inspector. As of the beginning of February 2020, City HCD estimates that they have issued rental licenses for approximately 52%-55% of the current total estimated universe of current rental units in Baltimore City.

HB 523 would aid significantly in achieving two important operational goals: (1) preventing scofflaw landlords from abusing taxpayer funded government resources in the District Court and the Sheriff's office to evict tenants when they have not come into compliance with local laws expressly enacted to improve and monitor the health, safety and welfare of the tenants in the City

---

<sup>1</sup> See Baltimore City Ordinance 18-130 (2018).

of Baltimore; and (2) to shift the burden onto the landlord to affirmatively prove they are in compliance with these laws, rather than the existing burden shifting regime that alternates back and forth between landlord and tenant, which has the practical effect of imposing an additional burden on taxpayer resources when City HCD produces evidentiary information around these licenses at issue.

HB 523 provides a massive step forward in preventing landlords from abusing taxpayer funded government resources where they are flouting local laws designed to protect the very tenants they profit off of on a daily basis.

For these reasons, the BCA requests a **favorable** report on HB 523.