



February 17, 2021

BILL NO: HB1015 Real Property – Transfer to Heir – Exemption from Prepayment of Taxes

COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Mid-Shore Pro Bono, Inc.

POSITION: SUPPORT

Mid-Shore Pro Bono (MSPB) recommends a favorable report on HB1015. By removing barriers to intergenerational transfer of ownership of property, this bill would help heirs of real property with limited means to maintain financial and housing stability, reduce homelessness, and prevent the loss of family homes.

Mid-Shore Pro Bono, Inc. is a Maryland nonprofit that connects low-income clients throughout Maryland's Eastern Shore with essential community resources. Each year, MSPB helps over 3,000 of our community's most vulnerable people access the legal system in times of need. Our network of volunteer lawyers provides free legal services on elder law, family law, landlord/tenant, mortgage foreclosure, consumer debt, and immigration. These services help families gain financial and housing stability and create safe, secure home environments for children, which is especially important in times of crisis.

During the COVID-19 emergency, MSPB has seen a significant increase in challenges faced by families with limited financial means to navigate the legal and financial impacts of losing a loved one. Surviving family members often lack the cash resources needed to pay for funeral expenses, medical bills, taxes, and other debts. Too often, heirs with limited means are unable to pay property tax bills in order to allow for real property to transfer to them. Sometimes families are forced to sell the family home where surviving family members are still residing in order to pay relatively minor property tax bills. Surviving family members may be forced into bankruptcy, foreclosure, and homelessness as a result of an inability to pay property tax. By exempting prepayment of real property taxes, surviving heirs have a much better opportunity to keep family homes intact, therefore maintaining financial and housing stability in our community.

For these reasons, MSPB urges the House Ways and Means Committee's support for HB1015. If you have any questions regarding our position on this bill, please contact Meredith Lathbury Girard, Esq., managing attorney, Mid-Shore Pro Bono at 410-690-8128 or mgirard@midshoreprobono.org.

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