



## House Bill 852

### *Property Tax - Tax Sales - Homeowner Protection Program*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**  
**WITH AMENDMENTS**

Date: February 16, 2021

To: Ways and Means Committee

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 852 with **AMENDMENTS**. This bill would establish a Homeowner Protection Program to offer homeowners facing tax sale potential cost avoidance, and offer help like payment assistance, foreclosure mediation, and other services.

The tax sale process, or more specifically the potential for a property to go to tax sale, presents a much-needed tool of last resort to ensure that property owners remit payment for their fair share of taxes and charges connected to public services. Of course, no jurisdiction wants to send any property to tax sale if it can be avoided.

MACo strongly prefers that homeowners receive all counseling, education, information, and support which may be available to them, and additional assistance when appropriate, to help them pay on time and avoid going through tax sale. To that end, MACo supports this bill as a wise approach to facilitating access to support services at the time when it is most helpful.

HB 852 would require the purchasers of delinquent tax liens to pay a \$25 fee for each certificate of sale, which could deter investors from participating in the tax sale process. Counties have a vested interest in maintaining their most effective collection tool, which provides certainty for local budgets, protects funding for essential services, and establishes a level playing field with property owners.

Counties welcome the opportunity to work with this Committee and relevant stakeholders to further refine the process, balancing the interests of property owners, investors, and local governments. Counties respectfully request that this Committee consider their need to collect revenues to fund essential public services fairly and efficiently when evaluating the many interests and needs involved in the process.

For these reasons, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 852.