



House Bill 236

Tax Sales – State Tax Sale Ombudsman – Outreach Campaign

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: February 7, 2023

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 236 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill requires the State Tax Sale Ombudsman to implement an annual outreach campaign to inform homeowners facing tax sale about resources and programs available through the Ombudsman’s office.

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.

State law requires local governments to collect delinquent real property taxes and other unpaid charges, all of which are liens against real property. Under current law, county governments must bring to tax sale all property in arrears for at least two years.

HB 236 requires the State Tax Sale Ombudsman to implement an annual outreach campaign to inform homeowners facing tax sale about resources available through the Ombudsman’s office, including the Homeowners’ Tax Credit and the Homeowner Protection Program. According to the bill, the outreach program will primarily consist of telephone calls to each homeowner whose dwelling is sold at tax sale.

MACo strongly prefers that homeowners receive all counseling, education, information, support, and additional assistance when appropriate to avoid the tax sale process. To that end, MACo supports this bill as a wise approach to facilitating access to support services when it is most helpful.

However, counties respectfully request that this Committee consider bolstering the outreach program by authorizing alternative communication methods to reach homeowners facing tax sale, as some homeowners may not have access to telephone services.

For these reasons, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 236.