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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

COMMITTEES:

LIQUOR CONTROL, CHAIRMAN  
URBAN AFFAIRS, MEMBER

November 20, 2013

Dear Council Members:

As two of the lawmakers who were primarily responsible for the Land Bank Bill enacted in 2012, we need to express our vision for the Land Bank in Philadelphia as City Council debates about the Land Bank proposal for the City.


Land Banks are intended to allow for a local board to acquire and dispose of vacant properties with the goal of turning properties that are financial liabilities and public safety concerns into community assets. The main function of a land bank is to avoid the unnecessary bureaucracy that now predominates the conversion of vacant properties. They need to foster a process that is understandable, transparent and efficient. The discussion for acquisition and disposition must be in the open.

Additionally, a land bank should be as independent of the current, stagnant political process as possible. We must trust in the members of the land bank and allow them to move as quickly as possible to solve Philadelphia's critical problems of property vacancy, tax delinquency and blight.

We are particularly concerned about the inclusion of the Vacant Property Review Committee in this process. It is an unnecessary step and one that will not allow the transparency that is required under the Act for the Land Bank Board. We should not require or allow an option to filter decisions through an additional board that will slow things down and bypass transparency requirements.

As the Council's legislative process continues, we urge the members to stay consistent with the purpose of the state statute. Let's not go backwards. We urge the enactment of an efficient, understandable and transparent Land Bank Bill for Philadelphia.

Sincerely,

  
John J. Taylor  
State Representative  
177<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

  
Chris Ross  
State Representative  
158<sup>th</sup> Legislative District