

Ballot Question

The petition is for the purpose of amending the Baltimore City Charter to add Section 20 to Article I, establishing a continuing, non-lapsing Community Wealth Building Fund to be used exclusively to provide broadly defined projects and programs related to expanding community ownership such as worker owned co-operative businesses, community owned land trusts, agriculture, investment funds, financial institutions and utilities.

Revenue for the Fund will be non-lapsing and permanent through a mandatory annual appropriation in the Ordinance of Estimates of an amount equal to at least \$0.06 on every \$100 of assessed or assessable value of all property in the City of Baltimore or its equivalent in payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) contributions by medical and educational nonprofits. The Charter amendment will not mandate any new tax or tax increase, and would allow the City to determine the source of funds provided that the mandatory amount is complied with.

The fund shall not be used to replace existing City support for community wealth building activities and may not be used to support projects controlled by a medical or educational anchor institution subject to a PILOT.

The Petition authorizes and directs oversight, governance, and administration of the Fund by a 15-member Commission appointed by the Mayor (or the City Council President if the Mayor fails to make timely appointments) to represent various constituencies with relevant expertise. The commission shall make recommendations to the City regarding the negotiation of future PILOT agreements, and shall use the fund to address structural racism and historic discrimination.

For the Charter Amendment Against the Charter Amendment

Full text:

Art. 1, § 20. Community Wealth Building Fund.

(a) *Fund established; Scope.*

(1) There is a continuing, non-lapsing fund to be used to create, support, and sustain community wealth building activities in Baltimore City, which shall be defined as including, but not limited to:

(i) worker owned co-operative businesses.

- (ii) community land ownership (including affordable housing land trusts, commercial community urban agriculture, conservation, and recreation)
- (iii) community engaged investment
- (iv) community owned financial institutions
- (v) community owned utilities
- (vi) and other institutions whereby Baltimore City residents exercise collective ownership or control of activities or entities involved in economic activity.

(2) The Community Wealth Building Fund may also be used to:

- (i) provide technical assistance, trainings, workshops, and outreach programs in support of these community wealth building activities; and
- (ii) provide for the administration and operation of the Fund.

(b) *Limitations on Use.* The Fund established under this section may not be used to supplant, substitute for or replace funding for community wealth building activities as herein defined and previously supported by the City. The fund shall not be used to support a community wealth building activity where a controlling interest is held by a medical or educational anchor institute that is subject to a PILOT agreement that contributes to the fund.

(c) *Revenue Sources.* The Fund established under this section shall comprise:

- (1) a mandatory annual appropriation in the Ordinance of Estimates of an amount equal to at least \$0.06 on every \$100 of assessed or assessable value of all property in the City of Baltimore (except property exempt by law) or an annual equivalent amount from contributions from the payment in lieu of tax (PILOT) agreements that medical and educational anchor institutions make to the city through contracts or memoranda of understanding;
- (2) fees, assessments, taxes, or other revenue designated to the fund by other law; and
- (3) grants and donations made to the Fund.

(d) *Continuing nature of Fund.* Notwithstanding any other provision of this Charter, unspent portions of the Fund established under this section:

- (1) remain in the Fund, to be used exclusively for its specified purposes;

- (2) do not revert to the general revenues of the City; and
- (3) their appropriations do not lapse.

(e) *Implementation; Community Wealth Building Fund Commission.*

- (1) The Fund shall be administered by a Community Wealth Building Fund Commission who shall be appointed, must be confirmed, and shall serve pursuant to Baltimore City Charter Article IV, Section 6, except that if the Mayor does not appoint initial Commission members within 90 days of the effective date of this section, the City Council President shall appoint the initial members.
- (2) All members of the Commission must be domiciled in Baltimore City.
- (3) The Commission shall include:
 - (i) The Mayor or their designee;
 - (ii) The Director of the Baltimore City Department of Planning or their designee;
 - (iii) The Commissioner of the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development or their designee;
 - (iv) Four persons with experience in the fields of worker owned cooperatives, community land ownership, community controlled urban agriculture project, community engaged investment, community financial institutions or community owned utilities;
 - (v) Two persons, each of whom has a household income that does not exceed 30% of the Median Family Income for the Baltimore metropolitan area;
 - (vi) Two persons, each of whom has a household income that does not exceed 50% of the Median Family Income for the Baltimore metropolitan area;
 - (vii) a member of the lending community with experience in community and economic development;
 - (viii) a unionized employee of one of the non-profit hospitals in a PILOT agreement with the City of Baltimore;
 - (ix) a unionized employee from one of the non-profit universities in a PILOT agreement with the City of Baltimore;
 - (x) a person with experience in racial equity and reparations practice; and

(xi) such different or additional members as may be designated by ordinance.

(4) The Commission shall elect a President from its members and may withdraw that designation and so designate another member at any time.

(f) *Community Wealth Building Fund Commission Duties.* The Commission established under this section shall:

(1) establish essential policies, rules, and regulations relating to the implementation, expenditures, and ongoing operation of the Fund established under this section and make these available to the public;

(2) employ staff or contract with a fiscal agent to carry out daily operations and administrative tasks;

(3) administer the Fund established under this section to eliminate structural racism, institutional racism and discrimination of all kinds based on immutable characteristics to ensure that outcomes and opportunities for all people are no longer predictable based on those characteristics;

(4) direct resources to communities and persons who have been excluded historically from wealth building opportunities;

(5) recommend just formula and methodology for 2026 PILOT reassessments and subsequent agreements;

(6) submit an annual report to the Mayor and City Council on the revenue sources, activities and usage of the funds in the Fund established under this section and make the report available to the public;

(7) ensure an audit of the Fund established under this section every four years by a certified public accounting firm; and

(8) exercise any different or additional duty as directed by ordinance.

(g) *Partial Invalidity.*

If any provision of this section or any application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, that invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this section which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application; and to this end, the provisions of this section are declared to be severable. This subsection shall be liberally construed to achieve the purpose of this section and to preserve its validity.

