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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE BILL

No. 811 Session of  
2021

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INTRODUCED BY FONTANA, MENSCH, COSTA AND L. WILLIAMS,  
JULY 20, 2021

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REFERRED TO URBAN AFFAIRS AND HOUSING, JULY 20, 2021

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AN ACT

1 Amending the act of May 16, 1923 (P.L.207, No.153), entitled "An  
2 act providing when, how, upon what property, and to what  
3 extent, liens shall be allowed for taxes and for municipal  
4 improvements, for the removal of nuisances, and for water  
5 rents or rates, sewer rates, and lighting rates; for the  
6 procedure upon claims filed therefor; the methods for  
7 preserving such liens and enforcing payment of such claims;  
8 the effect of judicial sales of the properties liened; the  
9 distribution of the proceeds of such sales, and the  
10 redemption of the property therefrom; for the lien and  
11 collection of certain taxes heretofore assessed, and of  
12 claims for municipal improvements made and nuisances removed,  
13 within six months before the passage of this act; and for the  
14 procedure on tax and municipal claims filed under other and  
15 prior acts of Assembly," further providing for municipal  
16 claims first lien, cities of first class, docketing, judgment  
17 and execution, for cities of the first class, recovery of  
18 judgment and sale free from claims, for redemption and for  
19 rule to show cause, decree, service and notice and providing  
20 disposition of property in cities of the second class.

21 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
22 hereby enacts as follows:

23 Section 1. Sections 3(b), 31.2(a), (b.1) and (b.2)(1) and  
24 32(a) of the act of May 16, 1923 (P.L.207, No.153), referred to  
25 as the Municipal Claim and Tax Lien Law, are amended to read:

26 Section 3. \* \* \*

27 (b) With the exception of those claims which have been

1 assigned, any municipal claim, municipal lien, tax, tax claim or  
2 tax lien, including interest, penalty and costs, imposed by a  
3 city of the first [class,] or second class or by a county of the  
4 second class or by a municipality therein, shall be a judgment  
5 only against the said property when the lien has been docketed  
6 by the prothonotary. The docketing of the lien shall be given  
7 the effect of a judgment against the said property only with  
8 respect to which the claim is filed as a lien. The prothonotary  
9 shall maintain an in rem index, the form and location of which  
10 shall be within the prothonotary's discretion. All tax claims,  
11 water rents or rates, lighting rates, power rates and sewer  
12 rates heretofore filed are hereby ratified, confirmed and made  
13 valid subsisting liens as of the date of their original filing.

14 \* \* \*

15 Section 31.2. (a) In addition to the remedies prescribed in  
16 sections [28,] 31 and 31.1 of this act, in cities of the first  
17 [class,] or second class and counties of the second class and  
18 any municipalities therein, whenever a claimant has filed its  
19 tax or municipal claim in accordance with the requirements of  
20 this act, it may file its petition in the court in which the  
21 proceeding is pending, setting forth the facts necessary to show  
22 the right to sell, together with searches or a title insurance  
23 policy, showing the state of record and the ownership of the  
24 property, and of all tax and municipal claims, liens, mortgages,  
25 ground rents or other charges on, or estates in, the land, as  
26 shown by the official records of the city or county, or the  
27 political subdivision in which the real estate is situate, and  
28 thereupon the court shall grant a rule upon all parties thus  
29 shown to be interested, to appear and show cause why a decree  
30 should not be made that the property be sold, freed and cleared

1 of their respective claims, liens, mortgages, ground rents,  
2 charges and estates. If upon a hearing, the court is satisfied  
3 that service had been made of the rule upon the parties  
4 respondent in the manner provided in [this act for the service  
5 of writs of scire facias to obtain judgments upon tax and  
6 municipal claims, and that contemporaneously with the service of  
7 the rule on the parties respondent notice of the rule has been  
8 published by the claimant in at least one newspaper of general  
9 circulation in the county, and in a legal periodical published  
10 therein, if any,] section 39.2 and that the facts stated in the  
11 petition be true, it shall order and decree that the property be  
12 sold at a subsequent sheriff's sale at a time to be fixed  
13 thereafter by the claimant, clear of all claims, liens,  
14 mortgages, ground rents, charges and estates, to the highest  
15 bidder at such sale and after payment of the tax or municipal  
16 lien the balance of the proceeds realized therefrom, shall be  
17 distributed in accordance with the priority of the remaining  
18 claims, liens, mortgages, ground rents, charges and estates, and  
19 the purchaser at such sale shall take and forever thereafter  
20 have, an absolute title to the property sold, free and  
21 discharged of all tax and municipal claims, liens, mortgages,  
22 ground rents, charges and estates of whatsoever kind, subject  
23 only to the right of redemption as provided by law. The date of  
24 the sale shall be advertised in at least one newspaper of  
25 general circulation in the county in which the property is  
26 located and in the legal periodical published therein.

27 \* \* \*

28 (b.1) A city of the first or second class may, within thirty  
29 days of any sale held under this section, petition the court of  
30 common pleas to prohibit the transfer of any deed for any

1 property exposed for any sale under this act which is located in  
2 that city to any purchaser who is proven to meet any of the  
3 criteria set forth in subsection (b.2).

4 (b.2) (1) The petition of a city of the first or second  
5 class shall allege that the purchaser has over the three years  
6 preceding the filing of the petition exhibited a course of  
7 conduct which demonstrates that a purchaser permitted an  
8 uncorrected housing code violation to continue unabated after  
9 being convicted of such violation and:

10 (i) failed to maintain property owned by the purchaser in a  
11 reasonable manner such that it posed a threat to health, safety  
12 or property; or

13 (ii) permitted the use of property in an unsafe, illegal or  
14 unsanitary manner such that it posed a threat to health, safety  
15 or property.

16 \* \* \*

17 Section 32. (a) The owner of any property sold under a tax  
18 or municipal claim, or his assignees, or any party whose lien or  
19 estate has been discharged thereby, may, except as provided in  
20 subsection (c) of this section, redeem the same if the property  
21 is not located in a city of the second class or a county of the  
22 second class or a municipality therein at any time within nine  
23 months from the date of the acknowledgment of the sheriff's deed  
24 [therefor,] and if the property is located in a city of the  
25 second class or a county of the second class or a municipality  
26 therein at any time within three months from the date of the  
27 acknowledgment of the sheriff's deed therefor, upon payment of  
28 the amount bid at such sale; the cost of drawing, acknowledging,  
29 and recording the sheriff's deed; the amount of all taxes and  
30 municipal claims, whether not entered as liens, if actually

1 paid; the principal and interest of estates and encumbrances,  
2 not discharged by the sale and actually paid; the insurance upon  
3 the property, and other charges and necessary expenses of the  
4 property, actually paid, less rents or other income therefrom,  
5 and a sum equal to interest at the rate of ten per centum per  
6 annum thereon, from the time of each of such payments. If both  
7 owner and creditor desire to redeem, the owner shall have the  
8 right so to do only in case he pays the creditor's claim in  
9 full. If more than one creditor desires to redeem, the one who  
10 was lowest in lien at the time of sale shall have the prior  
11 right, upon payment in full of the claim of the one higher in  
12 lien. Within nine months if the property is not located in a  
13 city of the second class or a county of the second class or a  
14 municipality therein or within three months if the property is  
15 located in a city of the second class or a county of the second  
16 class or a municipality therein, one who was lower in lien may  
17 redeem from one higher in lien who has already redeemed, and the  
18 owner may redeem from him; and so on throughout, in each case by  
19 paying the claim of the one whose right was higher; and one  
20 higher in lien may redeem from one lower in lien, unless his  
21 claim is paid; but in each case the right must be exercised  
22 within [nine months] the time specified in this section.

23 \* \* \*

24 Section 2. Section 39.2(a), (a.1), (b), (b.1) and (c) of the  
25 act are amended to read:

26 Section 39.2. (a) In cities of the first [class,] or second  
27 class and counties of the second class and municipalities  
28 therein, notice of a rule to show cause why a property should  
29 not be sold free and clear of all encumbrances issued by a court  
30 pursuant to a petition filed by a claimant under section 31.2 of

1 this act shall be served by the claimant upon owners,  
2 mortgagees, holders of ground rents, liens and charges or  
3 estates of whatsoever kind as follows:

4 (1) By posting a true and correct copy of the petition and  
5 rule on the most public part of the property;

6 (2) By mailing by first class mail to the address registered  
7 by any interested party pursuant to section 39.1 of this act a  
8 true and correct copy of the petition and rule; and

9 (3) By reviewing a title search, title insurance policy or  
10 tax information certificate that identifies interested parties  
11 of record who have not registered their addresses pursuant to  
12 section 39.1 of this act, the [city] claimant shall mail by  
13 first class mail and either by certified mail, return receipt  
14 requested, or by registered mail to such addresses as appear on  
15 the respective records relating to the premises a true and  
16 correct copy of the petition and rule.

17 Service of notice pursuant to this section shall be deemed  
18 accomplished on the date of mailing. The [city] claimant shall  
19 file an affidavit of service with the court prior to seeking a  
20 decree ordering the sale of the premises.

21 (a.1) In counties of the second class and municipalities  
22 therein, notice of a rule to show cause why a property should  
23 not be sold free and clear of all liens and encumbrances issued  
24 by a court pursuant to a petition filed by a claimant under  
25 sections [28] 31 and 31.1 of this act shall be served by the  
26 claimant upon owners, mortgagees, holders of ground rents, liens  
27 and charges or estates of whatsoever kind as follows:

28 (1) By posting a true and correct copy of the petition and  
29 rule on the most public part of the property.

30 (2) By reviewing a title search, title insurance policy or

1 tax information certificate that identifies interested parties  
2 of record, the county or municipality shall mail by first class  
3 mail and either by certified mail, return receipt requested, or  
4 by certificate of mailing to such addresses as appear on the  
5 respective records relating to the premises a true and correct  
6 copy of the petition and rule. Notice pursuant to this section  
7 shall be deemed accomplished on the date of mailing. The [county  
8 or municipality] claimant shall file an affidavit of service  
9 with the court prior to seeking a decree ordering the sale of  
10 the premises.

11 (b) No party whose interest did not appear on a title  
12 search, title insurance policy or tax information certificate or  
13 who failed to accurately register his interest and address  
14 pursuant to section 39.1 of this act shall have standing to  
15 complain of improper notice if the [city] claimant shall have  
16 complied with subsection (a) of this section. This provision  
17 shall not apply if the mortgage or interest was otherwise  
18 properly recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds or the  
19 Department of Real Estate, as applicable, and the document  
20 contains a current address sufficient to satisfy the notice  
21 requirements of this section. Notwithstanding any other  
22 requirement set forth in this act or any other law to the  
23 contrary, the notice required by subsection (a) of this section  
24 shall constitute the only notice required before a court may  
25 enter a decree ordering a tax sale.

26 (b.1) No party whose interest did not appear on a title  
27 search or title insurance policy, because of the party's failure  
28 to record or properly record its interest, shall have standing  
29 to complain of improper notice if the county or municipality  
30 shall have complied with subsection (a.1). This provision shall

1 not apply if the mortgage or interest was otherwise properly  
2 recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds or the  
3 Department of Real Estate, as applicable, and the document  
4 contains a current address sufficient to satisfy the notice  
5 requirements of this section. Notwithstanding any other  
6 requirement set forth by subsection (a.1), notice thereunder  
7 shall constitute the only notice required before a court may  
8 enter a decree ordering a tax sale free and clear of liens.

9 (c) Notice of the court's decree ordering a tax sale,  
10 together with the time, place and date of the sale, shall be  
11 served by first class mail on all parties served with the  
12 petition and rule, on any parties whose interest appeared of  
13 record after the filing of the petition but before the court's  
14 decree and on any creditor who has obtained judgment against the  
15 owner of the premises prior to the date of the decree. The  
16 [city] claimant shall file an affidavit of service of these  
17 notices prior to the date of the sale.

18 \* \* \*

19 Section 3. The act is amended by adding a section to read:

20 Section 39.6. The mayor of a city of the second class may  
21 designate an agency for the acquisition, administration,  
22 maintenance and disposition of property acquired by the city of  
23 the second class at a sheriff's sale. The city of the second  
24 class, or its agent, may act as an agent for a taxing authority  
25 having a claim against property under this section, pursuant to  
26 a locally negotiated agreement that positively affirms the  
27 consent by each taxing authority to allow the city of a second  
28 class to act as an agent on each taxing authority's behalf. A  
29 city of the second class acting as an agent for a taxing  
30 authority under this section may take any actions necessary to

1 protect and defend a taxing authority's rights and obligations  
2 under this act.

3 Section 4. The amendment of section 32(a) of the act shall  
4 apply to a sheriff's sale conducted on or after the effective  
5 date of this section.

6 Section 5. This act shall take effect in 60 days.