

**Department of Housing and
Community Development
Response
Case # 22-0023-I**



Memorandum

TO: Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
FROM: Alice Kennedy, Housing Commissioner
DATE: July 31, 2023
SUBJECT: Response to Management Alert OIG Case: 22-0023-I

DHCD has responded with the due urgency and seriousness related to management alert 22-0023-I.

Upon review, DHCD determined that guidance around reporting bribery attempts from customers should be provided to the entire agency. Many employees are involved in business interactions with the public. This includes actions such as, but not limited to, processing permits, performing building inspections, issuing code violations, the acquisition and disposition of property, providing rehab services, legal filings and awarding grants.

Working with the City Law Department, DHCD has put the following guidance in place around attempted bribery of agency employees. All employees will receive the attached memo, which reminds staff of the City's ethics code related to gifts and bribery. Employees are to report any bribery attempts to their immediate supervisor, the Deputy Commissioner for their division and also the Office of the Inspector General.

At this time, this has been issued as guidance to employees. Issuing it as an official policy requires review by the Department of Human Resources, the Office of the Labor Commissioner and negotiations with the unions. DHCD staff are represented by either the City Union of Baltimore or the Managerial and Professional Society. DHCD will be evaluating if this needs to be issued as an official policy, and if so, will take the aforementioned steps needed for implementation.

Currently building inspectors are required to complete a checklist for all Use and Occupancy inspections. Deputy Commissioner for Permits and Litigation Jason Hessler is working on a memo for building inspectors that will address when and where and how an inspector's discretion can be used. We will provide a copy of this memo when it is completed.

Should you have any questions or concerns or need for further explanation from DHCD, I can be reached via telephone at 410-382-5803.

CC: The Honorable Brandon M. Scott, Mayor
Ebony Thompson, Acting City Solicitor
Stephen Salsbury, Deputy City Solicitor
Faith Leach, Chief Administrative Officer
Simone Johnson, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Justin Williams, Deputy Mayor
Scott Davis, Chief of Staff; DHCD
Theo Ngongang, Chief Operating Officer; DHCD
Felicia Knight-Davis, Chief Human Resources Officer; DHCD
Jason Hessler, Deputy Commissioner; DHCD



Memorandum

TO: All DHCD Staff
FROM: Alice Kennedy, Housing Commissioner
Department of Housing and Community Development
DATE: August 10, 2023
SUBJECT: Attempted Bribes

DHCD employees frequently interact with community members in business interactions. This includes actions such as, but not limited to, processing permits, performing building inspections, issuing code violations, the acquisition and disposition of property, providing rehab services, legal filings and awarding grants.

Unfortunately, third-parties may attempt to bribe DHCD employees to ensure a positive outcome. "Bribery" is the offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting of something of value for the purpose of influencing an action or the discharge of official duties by a public official.

City of Baltimore employees are not permitted to accept bribes. Accepting a bribe is not only a violation of Baltimore City Ethics Law that will lead to termination of employment, accepting a bribe is a crime that may lead to criminal charges.

Baltimore City Ethics Law, established under Article 8 of the Baltimore City Code, governs the economic and regulatory relationships between Baltimore City employees and those who have dealings with Baltimore City.

Baltimore City Ethics Law prohibits public servants from soliciting or facilitating the solicitation of a gift. There are some specifically listed exceptions in the code to when a gift can be accepted. However, all DHCD personnel shall understand that money or other items of monetary value, such as a meal, offered in relation to performing any City service is not permitted and does not fall under the gift exception.

If you are approached with an attempted bribe, immediately report that attempt to your **immediate supervisor**, copying the **Deputy Commissioner** for your division and the **Office of the Inspector General** at oig@baltimorecity.gov.

Attached (exhibit 1) for reference is a copy of the Maryland Criminal Law Statute related to bribes and attempted bribes of public employees.

Attached (exhibit 2) for reference is a copy of the Baltimore City Ethics Code related to gifts.