



# HARFORD COUNTY, MARYLAND

## Office of the County Auditor

### AUDIT OF HOTEL OCCUPANCY TAX - WINGATE BY WYNDHAM

**Report Number:**  
2025-A-13D

**Report Date:**  
9/22/2025

Council Members and County Executive Cassilly:

In accordance with Section 213 of the Harford County Charter, we have performed an audit of Hotel Occupancy Tax paid by Wingate by Wyndham for the period of 7/1/2023 through 5/31/2025. This audit was conducted as part of the County Auditor's risk-based Annual Audit Plan approved by the County Council for FY2025.

The objective of this audit is to determine if the County has collected the correct amount of revenue for the Hotel Occupancy Tax based upon supporting information from taxpayers. The results of the audit, our findings and recommendations for improvement are detailed in this report.

We would like to thank the members of management for their cooperation during the audit; they have been provided an opportunity to respond to this report; the response provided by the County Treasurer follows the Issues and Corrective Actions. The hotel operator did not provide a response.

Sincerely,

*Chrystal Brooks, CPA*

Chrystal Brooks  
County Auditor

### CONCLUSIONS

Our opinion, based on the evidence obtained, is taxes were paid timely, but revenue and exemptions were not reported completely. This assessment is based on the strengths and weaknesses identified for the operational objectives below.

| Business Process Objective                    | Assessment <sup>i</sup> |
|---|-------------------------|
| Hotel revenue is fully reported to the County | Not Effective           |
| Tax payments are complete and timely          | Generally Effective     |

## ISSUES AND CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

### 2025-A-13D.01 Hotel Revenue Incorrectly Reported

We reviewed the hotel occupancy tax reporting forms submitted by Wingate by Wyndham and compared that information to reports from the hotel's management system and its Profit and Loss (P&L) statements for the same time period. We noted that while the room revenue reported agrees to the hotel management system, it does not agree to the amounts recorded as Lodging Sales in the P&L records. We inquired of the hotel operator to try to determine the reasons for the variances, both positive and negative. The hotel's accountant provided information explaining that revenue is reported on a cash basis so there may be deposit timing differences. He also advised that there were previously unreported, non-taxable sales totaling approximately \$47,000 in 2024. Although we asked, the hotel operator has not provided any clarifying information about those sales, so we are led to believe that the amounts excluded as non-taxable are, in fact, taxable occupancy sales.

We have calculated the related underpaid balance, penalties, and interest to total approximately \$4,200.

We recommend the Treasurer's Office take steps to notify the hotel operator and collect the unpaid balance.

**Management Response:** Administration agrees with the findings and will contact the hotel operator to obtain the unpaid balance.

Expected Completion Date:

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## **BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY**

Harford County adopted a Hotel Occupancy Tax, via Bill 14-035, for the purpose of expanding its tourism and tourism-related activities. The legislation requires hotel operators within the County to collect a 6% tax from all occupants. All hotels within the County are required to register with the County Treasurer and remit the collected occupancy tax monthly.

The audit approach focused on testing the key controls that address management's objectives. Our audit procedures included interviewing personnel, observation, and testing as described in the table below.

| <b>Process / Control Objective</b>                                | <b>Scope of Review</b>  |
|---|---|
| <b>Revenue Reporting</b>  |   |
| Monthly and Daily occupancy reports agree to the revenue reported | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review a sample of monthly payments to confirm the total revenue reported was supported by the daily occupancy reports</li><li>• Agree reported amounts to the taxes that were remitted to the County</li></ul> |
| Non-financial records support the revenue reported                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For a sample of dates, confirm the daily occupancy reports were supported by Housekeeping and other records</li></ul>   |
| <b>Tax Payments</b>   |   |
| Tax payments are sent to the County on time and completely.       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recalculate a sample of payments based on reported revenue</li><li>• Recalculate late fees, if applicable</li></ul>   |

Areas for improvement are described in the Issues and Corrective Actions section of this report.

The hotel operator's management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls. Internal control is a process designed to provide reasonable assurance that objectives pertaining to the reliability of financial records, effectiveness and efficiency of operations including safeguarding of assets and compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations are achieved. Because of inherent limitations in internal control, errors or fraud may nevertheless occur and not be detected.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions

based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

| Report Distribution:                          | Audit Team:  |
|---|--|
| Mr. Nilesh Patel, Wingate by Wyndham, Manager | Chrystal Brooks<br>CPA, CIA, CGAP, CISA, CGFM, CRMA<br><i>County Auditor</i> |
| Mr. Robert Sandlass, County Treasurer         | Brad DeLauder, CPA<br><i>Senior Auditor</i>                                  |

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<sup>i</sup> Definitions

**Effective:** The design and effectiveness of the internal control environment address key risks. The business unit complies with external laws and regulations, and internal policies, procedures and guidelines. Business processes are managed effectively resulting in achievement of expected outcomes.

**Generally Effective:** The design and/or effectiveness of the internal control environment generally address key risks; however, the number and severity of findings relative to the size and scope of the business unit being audited indicate that some minor areas of weakness in the control environment need to be addressed. Isolated instances of non-compliance with external laws and regulations, and internal policies, procedures and guidelines may exist. Business processes may not be managed effectively in all areas resulting in reduced achievement of expected outcomes.

**Not Effective:** The design and/or effectiveness of the internal control environment does not address key risks. Non-compliance or historical patterns of non-compliance with key regulatory requirements and internal policies, procedures and guidelines exist which expose the audited entity to financial, reputational, and operational risks. Business processes are not managed effectively and expected outcomes are not achieved.