

May 13, 2025
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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL# 25-0036

Property Taxes – Baltimore City Payment in Lieu of Taxes Task Force

TO: Chair McCray, Vice Chair Schleifer, and Members of the Budget & Appropriations Committee

FROM: Amanda DeStefano

My name is Amanda DeStefano. I am a resident of Baltimore City's 3rd District. I am submitting this testimony in support of Council Bill 25-0036 Baltimore City Payment in Lieu of Taxes Task Force, and urge a favorable report with no weakening amendments.

I have been organizing in Baltimore City for more than a decade in various capacities, campaigning for the right of all Baltimoreans to have housing that is affordable, accessible, safe and secure. In my current role as a steering member of Housing Our Neighbors, I frequently engage with residents at Baltimore City shelters. I have heard numerous accounts of shelters that are without air conditioning in the heat of summer, improperly heated in the dead of winter, overfull, with bed bugs and other pests, moldy, with inadequate and sometimes completely inedible food.

I have spoken with city residents who live among blocks of vacants, some with leaks, rats, or other problems that are impacting their home's livability, and sometimes even their ability to procure home insurance. I have waited more than 9 months for a traffic study to be completed on my block, when an 11 year old girl was hit by a speeding car two years ago. I have had to have my car repaired because of the poor conditions of some of our roadways.

And at the root of all of these issues, is funding. City residents deserve reliable, good quality public services — from our city homeless shelters, to our schools, to our public transportation,

our road repairs, our water mains that need replacing, and I could go on. We know that Baltimore's tax base is shrinking, yes due to people moving out of the city, but much more so because of the incredible volume of property, more than \$5 Billion worth, which is owned by non-profit entities who are exempted from paying property tax.

It is incomprehensible that the city forgoes nearly \$120 million of property taxes from the 14 wealthiest nonprofit hospitals and universities in our city, who use an additional \$47 million worth of city services annually, and yet pay only \$6 million per year, collectively, as part of their current PILOT agreement. Developing a PILOT Task Force will ensure that the upcoming agreement is developed in a transparent and equitable way. I strongly encourage you to support Council Bill 0036 without any weakening amendments, so that the PILOT can be fairly renegotiated to bolster our city's infrastructure and support our communities. Asking these institutions to pay their fair share is not asking too much. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony and I look forward to the swift passage of CB#0036.