

May 12, 2025

Councilwoman Danielle McCray, Chair, Budget & Appropriations
Baltimore City Council
Baltimore City Hall, Suite 400
100 N. Holliday St
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: City Council Bill 25-0036

Chair McCray, President Cohen, & Members of the Committee & the Council,

My name is Shawna Stepp-Jones, and I am the founder and CEO of the Divaneering Lab. My company is a hardware-focused beauty-tech company that aims to change the game for wig and weave wearers. I hold engineering degrees from Morgan State University and Johns Hopkins University Whiting School of Engineering.

I started Divaneering to create pathways for women and girls to pursue careers in STEM. My lab's workshops have challenged thousands of girls from kindergarten through 12th grade with engineering design enrichment. Johns Hopkins provided me with valuable support to realize my vision for Divaneering. My time at Johns Hopkins was more than academic—it was transformational. It gave me vision. It sharpened my leadership skills. Hopkins gave me access to a world I had only read about. It expanded my capacity to think bigger. It gave me permission to dream beyond my zip code. Beyond academics, I was able to participate in Johns Hopkins Social Innovation Lab where I gained meaningful connections and relationships that have helped me amplify my impact across the city.

Baltimore's nonprofit universities and hospitals act as unparalleled economic, social, and cultural engines for the city. They educate future innovators and entrepreneurs; they conduct lifesaving research; they promote public health; they provide world-class healthcare; and they develop the economy and the workforce. Their work with startups provides risk-takers with good ideas with pathways to success, and this grows the local economy.

Nonprofit colleges and health systems give back in amazing ways and grow the city in unique ways that benefit residents, companies, and the local economy. In this time of unprecedented uncertainty, I hope that you will consider the great good works that these Eds & Meds do in Baltimore and for Baltimore.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Shawna Stepp-Jones
Chief Executive Officer
Divaneering Lab