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Public Health & Environment Committee
Councilwoman Phylicia Porter, Chair
Councilman Mark Conway, Vice-Chair
100 N. Holliday St
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To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Jason Rodriguez. I'm the Deputy Director of *People Empowered By The Struggle*, and I'm standing here to say what too many people are too afraid to say out loud.

Let me be real clear today because the time for soft language and polite policy talk has passed.

Shame on you. Shame on this city. Shame on the people who are supposed to be protecting us.

We have criminalized public drinking. We shame people for being drunk in public. We lock them up. We judge them, we fine them. Yet somehow, when a person is standing in the middle of the street high out of their mind, swaying like a leaf in the wind, nearly getting hit by cars you all look the other way like it's compassion.

That's not compassion. That's cowardice.

We've watched police officers maneuver around human beings laid out on sidewalks like they're traffic cones. We've seen buses swerve to avoid running over people who've nodded out in the street.

And you mean to tell me *they* have the right to occupy our streets in that condition, and we the taxpayers, the workers, the families, the children have to tiptoe around it?

You call that harm reduction? I call that enabling destruction.

Let's get something straight we are not saying people shouldn't do what they choose behind closed doors. But when your choice endangers everybody else, when it becomes a public health risk, a public safety hazard, and a visual trauma our children see every single day then it's no longer just your choice. It's a city failure.

How dare you normalize this chaos. How dare you pretend this is okay.

You want to talk about harm reduction? Okay tell me how a kit filled with needles, Narcan, fentanyl test strips, gauze, tourniquets, and condoms helps a person who's snorting, popping pills, or using inhalants?

It doesn't.

So let's cut the fake empathy. Your harm reduction efforts are targeted, selective, and performative. You're not helping everyone, you're catering to a specific narrative because it's politically convenient. You picked your favorite addicts and left the rest of them and all of us to suffer.

You've allowed the streets of Baltimore to become a human graveyard with a heartbeat. And now, entire communities live in fear not just of crime, but of stepping over someone who might be dead or about to be. And is that somehow *acceptable policy*?

No. That's negligence. That's abandonment. That's a disgrace.

You failed them. And you failed us.

What message are we sending our children? That it's normal to see people collapsed on sidewalks? That drug use in public is just another part of the scenery? That this is the future waiting for them?

If that's your idea of a city strategy then burn it down and start over. Because it's not working.

We are not against help. We are not against recovery. We are not against compassion. But compassion without accountability is just chaos dressed in a lab coat.

So I'm asking, no I'm demanding that this city stop using harm reduction as a shield to justify neglect. Start treating all drug use as a public concern, not just the kind that comes with needles.

Because if you're not going to protect the people who still believe in Baltimore, who fight for its soul every single day then maybe you're the real harm that needs reduction.

Thank you.

