



MAY 12, 2025

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

RE: CITY COUNCIL BILL 25-0036

Chair McCray & Councilmembers,

I am Ellen Janes, Executive Director of the Central Baltimore Partnership (CBP). For nearly ten years I have worked with Johns Hopkins University (JHU), Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) and Medstar, who have all contributed significantly to the eleven neighborhoods we serve. They have each been superb partners with the 150 plus organizations who actively participate in CBP.

Our partners—from neighborhood associations to artists and arts groups, small businesses and these major institutions—share the goal of creating a community where everyone can participate and everyone can thrive. We work together to activate vacant property; create employment and youth opportunity; support legacy as well as new homeowners; improve health; recruit Black- and women-owned businesses and help them grow; and improve the safety and attractiveness of public spaces.

We work most closely with Johns Hopkins, whose contribution to the revival of Central Baltimore has been recognized locally, across the state and nationally. JHU has:

- Offered Live Near Your Work grants to homebuyers along the Greenmount Avenue Corridor;
- Leased space for classrooms and offices in long vacant buildings now transformed into new landmarks—like the Centre Theatre;
- Supported the expansion of small businesses including most recently the re-opening of Thai Restaurant;
- Made possible over 100 community Spruce-Up projects transforming blighted open spaces into neighborhood parks and play areas and raising up new community leaders; and
- With Medstar and Keswick helped launch and operate the high-impact health suite at the J Van Story Branch housing tower—the City’s largest remaining low-income housing facility.

These investments have resulted in remarkable population growth in some of our neighborhoods—nearly 25 percent in the Station North Arts District—while attracting new residents from every demographic group and preserving income diversity.



The work JHU has supported—complemented by MICA and Medstar and over 150 community partner organizations—are in addition to JHU’s core mission, which blesses Baltimore with world-renowned education, research, and medical facilities. All told JHU, MICA and Medstar epitomize the purpose of tax-exempt status and other tax incentives meant to offer community benefits that are otherwise not possible.

While it might be that the proposed Task Force will gather information of value to all of us working to improve Baltimore, such an investigation at this time ignores the enormous stress tax-exempt organizations from JHU to the Central Baltimore Partnership are working under now. Nearly every day brings more bad news—whether cancelled grants or new “legal” restrictions—to the City’s nonprofits of all sizes—raising previously inconceivable threats to our work, our staff, and ultimately to the vitality of Baltimore.

Instead of the effort proposed, I strongly urge the members of this Committee and all our City’s elected leaders to focus on how the City can—with care but urgency—support Baltimore’s critical tax-exempt organizations through this extraordinarily difficult time.

Thank you for this opportunity and please do not hesitate to contact me if I might be of assistance to you and the Budget & Appropriations Committee.

SINCERELY,



Ellen Jones
Executive Director

