

My name is Samantha Williams, and I am an immigration social worker in Baltimore. I work directly with immigrant newcomer families, asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, and immigrant survivors of crime. My experience working in Baltimore over the past almost 8 years has shown me that there are huge needs to bolster Baltimore's general fund, in order to improve education, public transportation, public infrastructure, language access, and the overall accessibility of city services. I have seen newcomer immigrant youth unable to reach school because of a failing public transportation system. I have seen survivors of crime unable to receive medical, mental health, and court services due to language access issues. I have seen refugees struggle to keep their first jobs in America because they can't afford the travel costs alongside their rent utility bills.

Without doubt, Baltimore's 14 anchor institutions have played a pivotal role in the city's growth and well-being. These institutions have a mission to serve all of us, regardless of background, status, or income. However, for years, these institutions have contributed far less than what they receive in return from the city through the current Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program. In fact, under the current agreement, these institutions contribute only 0.04% of their overall operating budgets to the city. Meanwhile, they utilize more than \$45 million in city services annually, more than 7 times what they pay under the current PILOT agreement.

We find ourselves at a critical time in American history. With federal attacks on all of us and our communities, both residents and institutions will be facing an uphill battle in the coming years. However, the most vulnerable Baltimore residents are being impacted most—facing higher water and utility bills, rising food costs, and increasingly unaffordable housing. Thus, even though the political climate is challenging to say the least, the wealthiest institutions in the city must not turn away from their responsibility to the city, and rather should turn towards the possibility to work collaboratively towards a new PILOT agreement that is favorable to all.

We need Bill 25-0036 to pass without any weakening amendments because we need a PILOT task force. This would legally ensure that we convene a diverse group of representatives from all interested parties, and ensure that all sectors of our city—especially the most vulnerable—are heard throughout this process. These fourteen institutions have a duty to our city, and we are not asking them to pay more than they can afford, we are only asking them to *pay their fair share* so that we may all live in a healthier and more prosperous city.

We must do all we can to make Baltimore accessible, equitable, and welcoming, and one way forward in this work is to support Bill 25-0036, and ensure it moves forward without weakening amendments.

Sincerely,
Samantha Williams