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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: Lena Amick

My name is Lena Amick. I'm a resident of Waverly in District 14. 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 lived in Baltimore for 8 years and am a teacher at Parkville High School, right over the city line. I have chosen to take a day away from my 9th grade U.S. History students to testify today, because I believe so strongly in the potential of a fair PILOT agreement to build the kind of city my students deserve.

I strongly support a timely, strong bill with balanced composition and a formula for nonprofit institutions to pay their fair share for the city services they use. According to data from the Comptroller's Office, under the current PILOT agreement, our 14 largest nonprofit institutions use \$47 million in city services yet contribute only \$6 million annually. My understanding is that when these institutions don't pay their fair share, the burden falls on me, my neighbors, and the other residents of this city. I don't feel good about my property taxes being used to fill the gap left by institutions with multi-billion dollar operating budgets.

It's no secret that Johns Hopkins University in particular is facing a targeted attack on its finances from the current presidential administration - I live near the university, I have friends whose jobs are at risk, and I lament these attacks. Yet, our city is also targeted, as reflected in our budget shortfall. We have a choice: work together to shore up the resources we all need,

or leave our city's working families to give up their homes, take on extra jobs, and risk their health to shoulder the burden alone.

Let's think about that \$47 million. If our anchor institutions were to actually pay our city for these services, it would cut our budget shortfall in half - without increasing taxes and fees on homeowners. With this funding, we could prevent 15,000 evictions each year. We could make it so our students don't have to spend hours each morning on the bus getting to school. We could fund rec centers and youth jobs programs. And for me, more importantly, we could convince my students to stay here, to see Baltimore as a place where they can follow their dreams. This funding would transform our city; let's not leave it on the table.

A fair PILOT process has precedent in other cities. Over the last 15 years, cities like Boston, New Haven, and Providence have reached similar agreements with their local institutions. PILOT funds in those cities have contributed significantly to transportation, workforce development, education, and quality of life. And those anchor institutions continue to thrive, not in spite of but because of a strengthened relationship with the city. We can do this too.

In closing, I'll remind you that this bill does not commit anyone to a dollar amount. Rather, it commits us to a collaborative process, with input from all parties, for a fair agreement that's transparent and accountable to our whole city community. Let's strengthen our commitment to the future of Baltimore and its partnership with the fourteen medical and private educational institutions by supporting an improved PILOT plan.

**I respectfully urge this committee to pass Council Bill #25-0036 without any weakening amendments.**