

May 13, 2025

Dr. Robin Owen Joyce
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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: Robin Owen Joyce

My name is Robin Owen Joyce. I am a resident of Baltimore City 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 am a museum worker who often collaborates with employees from anchor institution universities. I am moved by my colleagues' personal commitments to civic engagement. However, as a resident of Baltimore City, I see that these individual good intentions are overshadowed by a systemic pattern of extraction that leaves ordinary Baltimoreans footing the bill for our wealthiest institutions. It's time to renegotiate our PILOT, and that process must be fair, transparent, and timely.

I don't own a car, so I'm reliant on public transit — which, in practice, often means walking for 30 minutes or more to get anywhere outside the “L” of historically white neighborhoods. Damaged, impassable sidewalks pose a constant hazard, sometimes forcing pedestrians like me to walk into traffic. In January, I tripped on a patch of neglected sidewalk and fell, breaking my hand and sustaining a concussion. These injuries have required months of medical rehabilitation, impacted my ability to work, and made me less confident navigating the city. Everyone I spoke to after my fall had a story of an injury or a near miss due to the city's poorly maintained sidewalks. If Baltimore's wealthiest universities and hospitals contributed in accordance with the cost of city services that they use, the city could repair 72 miles of streets and sidewalks annually. By using city services without contributing in line with their ability, anchor institutions exacerbate the physical fragmentation and segregation of Baltimore.

A fair, transparent, and timely PILOT negotiation will benefit all Baltimoreans. Applying a clear, standardized formula will ensure that institutions' payments align with their size and economic footprint. Public meetings of a representative taskforce —one that includes labor and community organizations alongside institutional representatives — will keep negotiations just, respectful, and productive.

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