



March 10, 2021

Re: Against City Council Bill 21-0029

Dear Council President Mosby:

I am the Managing Director of the Chesapeake Shakespeare Company and we have been proud residents of Downtown Baltimore since we relocated here in 2014 to the most beautiful theatre in Baltimore. I am writing in opposition to the proposed 490% increase in the parking garage license fee.

Before the pandemic, we employed sixteen staff members, approximately one hundred artists annually, and brought approximately 15,000 people each year to our Downtown theatre, almost all of whom parked in local garages at night. We hope, by the fall, we will be returning to those numbers again.

The vast majority of our patrons are coming by car and at night. They need a safe, well-lit garage that is open after 10:00 at night or they simply will not attend our performances. Older patrons already express reluctance to come Downtown. In 2019, they were being charged a reasonable evening parking rate but if that rate increases, they may choose to stay on their couch and watch Netflix instead—and we will not be able to operate our theatre and you will not have the invaluable foot traffic that helps make Downtown more livable and safer.

Our staff and our artists are paid as nonprofit employees are—modestly. Parking is a huge financial burden on them. We would be forced to increase their pay to help cover those costs—an increase we can ill afford after a year of no earned revenue.

It seems incredible to me that commercial garages, which have been decimated in this pandemic year (previously, I almost always wound up on the 11th floor of my garage and now I always park on the 3rd floor because the garage is so empty) would be made even more vulnerable by this ill-conceived bill.

I will allow the Downtown Partnership to make all the arguments of financial comparatives and fairness. I will only say that this proposed fee structure will have ripple effects that will have severe repercussions for the entertainment industry and the entire Downtown economy and infrastructure.

I urge you to vote against this bill.

Yours sincerely,

Lesley Malin

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Managing Director

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