
Testimony by Executive Director, Wide Angle Youth Media On the Importance of Anchor Institutions and Their Nonprofit Status

Good Chairwoman McCray, Councilwoman Porter, the task force, and all the members of the budget and appropriations committee my name is Susan Malone, and I serve as the Executive Director of Wide Angle Youth Media, a Baltimore-based nonprofit that empowers young people to tell their own stories through media arts and leadership development.

I'm here today to speak about the essential partnerships between community organizations like ours and the anchor institutions that help keep our city strong—especially our local public universities and hospitals. These institutions do far more than educate and heal—they serve as critical collaborators, trusted employers, and foundational supporters of Baltimore's nonprofit sector.

At Wide Angle, we've seen firsthand how these partnerships amplify our work. Local universities like MICA and Johns Hopkins University have been instrumental to our growth. MICA's socially engaged programs connect us with student artists whose community-based work enriches our programming. Many of these students continue their service through careers in education, civic media, and nonprofit leadership—some even join our staff or apprenticeship programs, bringing a lasting commitment to Baltimore youth.

Johns Hopkins has not only placed exceptional student interns with us through their CIIP summer program—boosting our capacity for over a decade—they also acted as a vital fiscal partner, helping us secure \$500,000 in state funding through DHCD. That funding would have been inaccessible without the university's nonprofit infrastructure.

These are not one-sided relationships. Our young people are invited into university classrooms, shaping future civic leaders with their lived experience and insight. These collaborations are reciprocal, respectful, and deeply rooted in a shared commitment to community progress.

But all of this is at risk. Any major shift to the nonprofit status of these institutions could have destabilizing effects—not only on organizations like ours, but on the broader ecosystem. Let's not forget that nonprofits employ 25% of Baltimore's workforce. As city and state budgets tighten, and funding becomes more scarce, the support we receive from our anchor partners becomes even more critical.

We are in a moment that calls for thoughtful partnership, not division. Let's ensure our policies strengthen—not weaken—the bonds between institutions and the communities they serve. Our shared progress depends on it.

Thank you.