

May 13, 2025
Baltimore, 21210

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: Eli Leshner

My name is Eli Leshner. I am a resident of Baltimore City District 14, an undergraduate student studying biophysics at Johns Hopkins University, and a student worker in the Department of Pediatrics at Johns Hopkins Hospital. 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.

As a Hopkins student and employee, I have been on the receiving end of institutional privilege—and how disconnected these benefits often are from the broader needs of Baltimore's residents. I directly benefit from services like Hopkins' private shuttles, safe and well-maintained buildings, and well-staffed facilities. At the same time, Baltimore is the only school district in our state that does not have a yellow bus service for middle and high schoolers. The services offered by our city's wealthy private institutions—funded in part by resources that could otherwise support the revitalization of Baltimore's aging public infrastructure—highlight the disparity between private investment and public need. Hopkins' \$2.3 billion endowment growth in one year could cover Baltimore's PILOT shortfall many times over.

These institutions and their affiliates use city services every day, from roads to water infrastructure to emergency services. They also benefit indirectly from the outcomes of city youth programs to prevent violence, as well as public health initiatives, sanitation services, and neighborhood revitalization efforts. Yet, these same institutions aren't paying proportionally for what they use and at the same time, offer services and benefits to their affiliates that far outstrip what the city is able to provide. This isn't just unfair—it's unsustainable. As Baltimore faces down austerity at the federal level, we need the financial support of our wealthiest local institutions to keep essential city services afloat.

Baltimore residents and local businesses have been subsidizing the costs of providing public services to these institutions for too long. It's time we build a fair agreement that asks wealthy universities and hospitals to pay their share, just like the rest of us. The task force proposed in Bill #25-0036 is a smart, fair, and necessary step forward.

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

Sincerely,
Eli Leshner