

# JOHNS HOPKINS

## UNIVERSITY & MEDICINE

August 24, 2022

The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council  
City Hall, Suite 400  
100 N. Holliday Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Honorable City Councilmembers,

Youth violence is a significant public health problem that affects thousands of young people each day, as well as their families, schools, and communities. The rise in youth violence in Baltimore is deeply troubling, and we applaud the City Council for introducing Council Bill 22-011R and their willingness to explore solutions and implement them collaboratively. As one of Baltimore's largest anchor institutions, one of the nation's top universities, and a leading provider of clinical care and public health related services, Johns Hopkins is invested in Baltimore's youth and offers the City Council the following testimony on this critical issue.

Experiencing violence as a child or teen is a serious threat to the health of our society. Violence can disrupt a young person's development and harm their current and future health. Moreover, it can limit life opportunities, lead to emotional and physical health problems, and shorten lives. The Center for Disease Control reports that homicide is the third leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24 and that youth violence results in more than 500,000 medically treated physical injuries each year<sup>1</sup>. Youth homicides and non-fatal physical assault-related injuries result in an estimated \$18.2 billion annually in combined medical and lost productivity costs alone<sup>2</sup>.

A range of complex factors, rather than one single cause, leads to youth-related violence. Therefore, a multifaceted approach that includes comprehensive interventions and support strategies – informed by the guidance and perspectives of public health experts, teachers, families, health care providers, and young people themselves – is needed to overcome the impact of violence in our community. We must also acknowledge that trauma caused by violence can manifest physically, emotionally, and/or socially for youth.<sup>3</sup> If we add the ongoing and

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020) Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/>.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020) Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/violence-prevention>

cumulative impact of historic racism, poverty, and oppression, we see a fuller picture of a cycle that needs interrupting to reduce and eliminate violence in Baltimore for our youth and families.

Johns Hopkins has implemented a number of programs to help reduce violence related trauma including our Behavioral Health Crisis Support Team, an effort that is a partnership between behavioral health providers and campus public safety officers to respond to individuals experiencing behavioral health crises on or immediately surrounding our Baltimore campuses.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, in 2021, Johns Hopkins launched the Innovation Fund for Community Safety, a \$6 million fund to establish programs aimed at making Baltimore's streets safer and its communities stronger through collaborative partnerships with the community. The nine funded projects include: art workshops to process trauma, a community mediation initiative between Latinx immigrants and Black youth, and abuse intervention services for previously incarcerated individuals, as well as those on probation or convicted of other crimes.<sup>5</sup>

Johns Hopkins has also committed to establishing, operating, and fully funding a Police Athletics/Activities League (PAL), a national program that works to build and strengthen relationships among youth, police, and the community. There are currently only two PAL programs in the country offered by university police departments, including a PAL launched in 2018 in West Baltimore by the University of Maryland Baltimore Police Department. Our commitment to creating a PAL center was codified in the Community Safety and Strengthening Act (SB 793) in 2019. JHU will collaborate with youth and families, adolescent health care experts, and public health violence prevention leaders to implement the PAL in a way that aims to build trust between officers and young people in the community.

Collaboration is key when it comes to seeking a holistic and effective solution to youth violence. Over the years, Johns Hopkins has supported a number of City-led youth violence prevention initiatives, including Baltimore's Group Violence Reduction Strategy, a nationally recognized and evidence-based model for crime reduction, as well as Safe Streets and Roca. Additionally, we are a lead sponsor of the Greater Baltimore Region Integrated Crisis System (GBRICS), a \$45 million, multihospital, regional collaboration to expand community based behavioral health crisis services in Baltimore City and Baltimore, Howard and Carroll counties, and created the Break the Cycle Hospital Violence Intervention Program (HVIP) as part of a comprehensive effort to reduce violent re-injury for patients in Baltimore.

We welcome the opportunity to explore other strategies and interventions that support our young people and are eager to continue our partnership with the Council to help address youth violence in our communities.

We would be happy to provide any guidance or assist in answering any questions that the Council may have regarding this topic.

Sincerely,

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<sup>4</sup> <https://publicsafety.jhu.edu/initiatives/behavioral-health-crisis-support-team/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://hub.jhu.edu/2021/06/30/innovation-fund-for-community-safety-grant-recipients/>

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