

BRANDON
SCOTT
FOR MAYOR

BUILDING
PUBLIC SAFETY
IN BALTIMORE:

An All-Hands-On-Deck Approach to Fighting
Crime in Our City

By Brandon Scott

“

We deserve to live in neighborhoods that are safe and secure, where the public health of our communities comes first and where our children can grow and thrive...

I believe in setting high goals and working diligently as a team to achieve them.

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”

Dear Baltimore,

Our city is in the midst of the worst public safety epidemic it has ever faced. 2019 was Baltimore's most violent year on record (per capita). Since 2015, there have been over 1,600 homicides, 3,300 non-fatal shootings, and nearly 3,500 fatal overdoses in Baltimore City. To me, these are not just numbers, they represent lives cut short, children without parents, parents without children, and communities overcome with trauma.

Our current strategy for fighting crime is not working. Every day we don't transform our approach, there are real consequences for Baltimore as a community.

The violence our city continues to experience, felt disproportionately in Baltimore's Black and historically-redlined neighborhoods, is what motivated me to become a public servant as a young man from Park Heights. I am running for Mayor to transform our city's approach to crime reduction, moving us from being focused solely on law enforcement to a comprehensive, holistic approach to public safety that centers public health. In Baltimore, only the Mayor has the power to set and execute on that vision.

Baltimore will not arrest or prosecute its way out of this problem. Baltimore's violence results from generational trauma, structural racism, lack of opportunity, and systemic under-investment in our city's youth and families. We will only sustain reductions in crime if our approach is comprehensive — grounded in the immediate action we can take today while simultaneously addressing the root causes of violence. It has to be both.

We can't end violence if we don't stop the flow of illegal guns that end up on our streets. We have to get better at targeting the small groups of people who commit the vast majority of murders, shootings, and aggravated assaults in Baltimore. We must also implement a life-saving approach to dealing with the opioid crisis. Opioids, particularly with the emergence of fentanyl, have taken hundreds of lives each year and fuel street-level violence.

We deserve to live in neighborhoods that are safe and secure, where the public health of our communities comes first and where our children can grow and thrive. City leaders and law enforcement agencies will never be able to do this alone. We must ask what every single city agency and institution that interacts with our residents can do to stop the violence. Baltimore can embody what it means to treat violence as a public health epidemic.

What I offer in the pages that follow is my vision for how we can create more equitable, safer and stronger communities across our great city. As Mayor, I will commit to measuring the impact of every program, policy, and initiative. We have to invest more deeply in what works and move away from what doesn't.

I believe in setting high goals and working diligently as a team to achieve them. **In each year of my term, I will aim to reduce homicides by 15%, getting us below 300 homicides in my first year as Mayor.**

Join me in building a public safety strategy that deals with the violence in our neighborhoods today while also confronting the root causes. Charting a new course will allow us to reduce crime long-term, not just for a year or two. Together, we can forge a new way forward for Baltimore.

Sincerely,

Brandon Scott
Baltimore City Council President

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I. PROTECTING COMMUNITIES

Safety and Accountability

For the fifth consecutive year, the number of homicides in Baltimore City has exceeded 300. There have also been more than 700 non-fatal shootings or attempted murders.¹ In 2019, less than one-third of homicides in Baltimore City were solved.² As long as people know they can get away with murder, we will struggle to overcome gun violence in our city.³

In each year of my term, I will aim to reduce homicides by 15%, getting us below 300 homicides in my first year as Mayor. By fully supporting the Consent Decree process to ensure our officers are policing in a constitutional way, partnering with our local, state, and federal law enforcement partners, and fully implementing a coordinated, holistic, data-driven approach to public safety, we can do this. While we know we must focus on the root causes for sustainable reductions to violence, we must also act with urgency to address the immediate causes of violence today.

Guns and Violent Repeat Offenders

The struggle for public safety is multifaceted, but must begin with addressing the record levels of gun violence in our communities. As Mayor, my most urgent charge will be removing guns and repeat violent offenders from the streets.

Establish a Group Violence Reduction Strategy

Gun violence in Baltimore has historically been committed by small groups of violent repeat offenders in defined areas of the city. In our hardest hit neighborhoods, residents should not feel terrorized by what police term “violent criminal networks,” which seemingly occupy communities. Under my leadership, we will identify violent criminal networks and remove them from our neighborhoods through consistent, targeted pressure and coordinated information sharing with our law enforcement agencies.

We must bring more credible mentors into this work, strengthen partnerships with the re-entry community, provide people with real opportunities to turn their lives around, and better connect resources with people who need them most. Reducing gun violence will require us to focus our resources and offer real alternatives to a life of crime.

In the past, Baltimore had some success reducing violence using a similar approach, but did not invest enough in creating true opportunities that had the potential to change conditions. Cities that have implemented a group violence reduction strategy, like New Orleans, have seen consistent gun violence reductions.⁴ Baltimore City has the resources to effectively do the same.

Target Gun Traffickers and Straw Purchasers

Many of the illegal guns used to commit violent crimes in Baltimore come from neighboring states. If we are going to reduce gun violence in Baltimore, we must stop the flow of illegal guns into our communities. As Mayor, I will target illegal gun traffickers and straw purchasers who funnel illegal guns into the city by establishing partnerships between BPD, our neighboring jurisdictions, and other federal agencies like the ATF and FBI. I will ensure people who illegally bring guns into our city are better held accountable.

Track Illegal Guns and Ammunition

We must get illegal guns off the streets through enforcement and prosecution. If we don't know who is making illegal guns and ammunition available on our streets, we will not solve this problem.

As Chair of the City Council Public Safety Committee, I led the way for Baltimore to use the “Crime Gun Intelligence Center” model, which provides BPD an opportunity to track illegal guns and ammunition.⁵ While this model already exists, it is not being used to its fullest extent. As Mayor, I will increase our commitment to tracking guns and ammunition used in crimes to their origin. I will also foster our relationships with state, regional, and federal law enforcement partners.

Create Dedicated Gun Courts

As a city with so many gun offenses, it makes sense to have a dedicated court system that focuses on gun cases in Baltimore. As Mayor, I will advocate for creating gun courts in Baltimore City. Gun courts have shown promise in cities like Philadelphia and Rochester to reduce recidivism and connect defendants to social services, rather than focusing merely on punishment.⁶ They also do a better job of efficiently processing cases, which is beneficial for safety and for justice. The use of these courts for juvenile and adult offenders will be instrumental in improving the outcomes of cases and saving lives.⁷

Conviction Assurance: Track Gun Case Outcomes

When gun cases get dropped because of unconstitutional policing or investigative practices, people who committed violent crimes can end up back on the streets. As Chair of the Public Safety Committee, I investigated why gun cases were getting dropped. I discovered neither the State's Attorney's Office nor BPD was even tracking or analyzing this data. As a result, I fought to secure funding for a data analyst position within the State's Attorney's Office to track cases and identify why charges are being dropped. This data will help the State's Attorney better prepare her attorneys and BPD strengthen its training and investigative practices.

As Mayor, I will take a data-driven and analytical approach to criminal justice issues. If chronic instances of unconstitutional policing or bad investigative work are leading to dropped cases, we should know and be prepared to take action to confront it. I will also increase funding to implement a crime analyst program within the State's Attorney's Office to review all cases involving violent repeat offenders. This data will improve our case preparation to ensure cases have a higher probability of being successfully prosecuted and appropriately sentenced.

Additionally, I will require BPD to step up training on constitutional search-and-seizure practices, interrogation, and report writing so that no case is dropped because a police officer failed to act in accordance with the law.

Address Intimate Partner Violence

To reduce violent crime, we must understand the role that intimate partner violence plays. Domestic violence accounts for 21% of all violent crime, with most incidents involving intimate partners. When guns are present in these situations, there is a 500% greater chance that the incident turns deadly. As a city, we have to do more to create a safety net for survivors in collaboration with prosecution, rehabilitation, and enforcement.

As Mayor, I will work with service providers, public health institutions, BPD, the Sheriff's Office, and the State's Attorney's Office to sensitively address intimate partner violence. My administration will work in partnership with community partners and direct service providers to establish the Baltimore City Family Justice Center, modeled after Montgomery County's, to bring providers, city agencies, and law enforcement officials under one roof. This center would offer comprehensive services from immigration advice to resources for survivors.

Data-Driven Approach to Public Safety

To make our public safety strategy effective, it is critical that we track where, when, and how crime occurs, while also analyzing that data to identify trends and better allocate resources. Baltimore was once a leader in using data in city governance. While the City and BPD continue to track data, we have moved away from using it as an accountability measure. As Mayor, I will refocus our efforts to use data to inform decisions and to hold agency heads accountable for their performance. I will also expand the way we use data so that city services work better for our neighborhoods most affected by gun violence and disinvestment.

Tie Crime Data to Accountability

As Mayor, I will rebuild BPD's program that tracks crime data and use that information to inform deployment, action, and resources. Multiple shootings on the same block in the same month should trigger not only a shift in BPD patrol strategy, but also the deployment of city services and resources with a sense of urgency.

To bring all the data we track into alignment, I will revamp the parallel, city government program that tracks performance data in all agencies. This should be used to hold department and agency leadership accountable to that performance. But also, this data can and should inform our efforts to reduce violent crime, too. To provide the most impacted neighborhoods with the resources they need, we must ensure our agencies fulfill their core functions equitably. This goes for filling potholes, cleaning up trash, and clearing alleys. Together, tracking data intentionally and using it to proactively prioritize service response can help reduce crime and make our communities feel more valued.

Track Agency Performance by Neighborhood

The performance of our city agencies is already tracked, but not at the neighborhood level. As Mayor, I will look at relevant metrics, including requests for service and crimes reported, compare that data over time, and present this in a public meeting in that neighborhood with members of my cabinet. This will allow residents, business owners, and other stakeholders to see what progress is being made to reduce crime and improve city services in their communities. This will give residents the opportunity to have a say in how their community is being served and provide feedback on what services need to be increased, improved, or abandoned.

Leverage State and Federal Partnerships

Our partners at the state and federal levels also track data, which aids in our ability to target criminal networks operating in our neighborhoods. Additionally, the Maryland Department of Public Safety has information about people returning to our communities. We can use this data to make sure we are supporting residents returning home from prison by making sure they have the resources and support they need for successful re-entry. At the same time, when people violate the law, we will ensure swift action is taken so they are no longer a danger to their community. As Mayor, I will also strengthen our data sharing practices and working relationships with relevant state and federal partners to aid in our fight against gun violence.

Ensure Integrity in the BPD

BPD's image has been tattered by police corruption, inappropriate behavior, and the mismanagement of taxpayer dollars. The actions of rogue cops have compromised the public's trust in the ability of police officers doing their jobs in a constitutional and productive way.

As Mayor, I will strongly prioritize accountability within BPD. Through active participation in the Consent Decree process, reviewing the policies and procedures of the police department, frequently calling for audits and internal investigations, and strengthening community oversight, we can identify patterns and trends that need to be corrected and hold wrongdoers accountable.

Implement the Consent Decree

As Mayor, I will commit to fully implementing the Consent Decree between BPD and the United States Department of Justice. The Consent Decree implementation process involves evaluating and revamping every element of BPD's policies and training procedures identified by DOJ, including stop and seizure, use of force, and de-escalation. Other cities that have undergone this process have seen fewer complaints against officers and increased trust between police and the communities they serve, without any corresponding increase in crime.⁸ This makes sense. Reforming BPD around constitutional policing is a prerequisite for residents to have trust in their department. Without that trust, residents will continue to feel uneasy about helping BPD effectively prevent and solve crime. As Mayor, I will support the Consent Decree process to help BPD earn residents' trust and become reliable resources in the community.

Strengthen Internal Accountability Measures

Integrity tests and other internal vetting mechanisms should be deployed on a regular basis to ensure officers are staying on task and being held accountable for their actions. Integrity tests randomly gauge whether an officer's response to a given scenario is appropriate. Integrity tests randomly test whether officers' response to a given scenario is appropriate. While this method is used in many big city police departments, we have not implemented it for BPD. As Mayor, I will direct BPD to do so.

Intervene When Officers Receive Significant Resident Complaints

When officers generate a significant number of complaints from residents in a police district, immediate action must be taken. I will bolster BPD's early intervention program to identify the officers who are receiving complaints and take prompt action. These officers will be pulled from their beat and required to complete a training tailored to the nature of the complaint before a determination is made about their ability to return to their posts. This training will focus on developing skills to ensure officers are able to effectively enforce the law while engaging in courteous constitutional policing.

Where appropriate given the nature of the complaint, residents and officers can elect to participate in a conflict resolution program provided through Community Mediation. These programs have a track record in our city for helping residents and officers find common ground and move forward in their relationship, but they are not always uplifted as an option to settle smaller disputes.

Restore Public Confidence in Internal Affairs Investigations

Residents who file a complaint with BPD Internal Affairs must have confidence that the complaint will be handled seriously and swiftly if we are ever to restore respect and integrity to the department. I will mandate that Internal Affairs investigations are completed within 180 days. Allowing the department to establish stronger controls over the behavior of officers who violate departmental policies.

Require Police Officers to Have Internal Affairs Experience

Every officer will be required to work in Internal Affairs for three months before being promoted to a supervisory rank. During this residency requirement, officers will learn how to conduct proper citizen complaint investigations, draft and submit formal charges, and conduct audits and integrity tests to ensure that their staff is policing in a fair and impartial manner. To achieve a sense of community policing, BPD supervisors should have experience in a range of posts, including one where they learn how to hold their colleagues accountable to the high standards we must set for our officers.

Patrol Operations

Baltimore residents deserve police officers who are truly a part of the communities they serve. As Mayor, I will make sure that the department better embodies a community policing approach. We must change the policies and culture of BPD to get officers back into the communities they serve, increasing their ability to solve and prevent crime.

We must simultaneously bring the department's patrol operations into the 21st century. By fully implementing new policies passed recently at the state level, from redistricting to civilianization, and by better using data to inform the way police patrol, we can make BPD more efficient and prepared to meet the needs of our neighborhoods with the resources available to them.

Root Officers in the Communities They Serve

I will direct the Police Commissioner to establish and implement a specialized unit transfer policy, which will require police officers to work in district-level uniform patrol for 3 years from the time they graduate before being eligible to transfer to a specialized unit. This will allow our police officers to gain familiarity and build relationships within the community, strengthen our neighborhood patrol bureau, increase retention, and reduce police overtime spending.

Further, officers currently assigned to or interested in operational specialized units will be required to take a departmentally-sanctioned written test. This test would encompass material on constitutional policing, probable cause, rules of evidence, the use of confidential informants, and the ability to draft a search and seizure warrant. Upon selection and on a semi-annual basis, they must participate in a specialized unit training course on the control of property and evidence specific to money seizures. Officers in these units will be subject to random polygraph tests, urinalysis testing, and mandatory complaint and disciplinary audits.

Get Sworn Officers Back on the Streets

As chair of the Public Safety Committee, I repeatedly called on the Mayor's Office and BPD to construct and adopt a civilianization plan to send sworn police officers back on the streets to fight crime. The lack of urgency to implement a civilianization plan has had a direct impact on the surge of violence that we are seeing in our neighborhoods. Only 13.6% of BPD personnel are civilian employees, which is significantly less than comparable police departments in other cities.⁹

I worked with Senator Antonio Hayes to pass legislation mandating that BPD increase its civilian ranks to 20% of its force.¹⁰ This will relieve sworn officers from many administrative functions and transfer those responsibilities to civilian employees. This effort will create hundreds of jobs for Baltimore City residents who want to serve their community, but may not want to serve as police officers.

As Mayor, I will adopt a minimum standard for the total number of sworn officers that will be assigned to patrol and other investigative duties.

Use Data to Make Patrol Deployment Decisions

We can be smarter about how we deploy officers on patrol by using data to inform that decision. In my administration, BPD will look at crime citywide and follow patterns within police districts and across the city as a whole. Analysts will evaluate these trends and compare them against historical data, calls for services, incident reports, and other metrics. We will use this information to inform deployment decisions and direct officers on where to focus while on patrol. By better integrating data into the operations of every facet of BPD, we can more effectively address crime and serve the communities of Baltimore City.

Establish Minimum Staffing Standards

Patrol was once the backbone of the Baltimore Police Department, and under my leadership it will be again. Under the current staffing model, there should be a minimum of 1,100 full-duty, uniformed police officers and supervisors available to respond to 911 calls for service. BPD has reported in legislative hearings that there are only 650 police officers assigned to neighborhood patrol despite having over 2,200 sworn police officers.¹¹ This lack of investment in patrol has contributed to increased overtime spending.¹²

As Chair of the Public Safety Committee, I took the issue of redistricting our police districts to Annapolis. I worked with Senator Cory McCray to pass legislation that mandates the redistricting of our police districts to align with the census, crime, and other data. With this, BPD will be able to respond to crime more effectively because their resources will be more appropriately aligned with the need on the ground.

Once this information is compiled, we will follow the national practice that allocates 2.7 sworn police officers for every 1,000 residents living in a designated area. Using this formula, combined with the redistricting plan, we will ensure that our communities have the appropriate coverage that they need without our police relying on overtime.

Clear the Backlog of Warrants

BPD is often tasked with serving court documents while performing their other duties, even though warrant service is typically a responsibility of the Sheriff's Office. To free up BPD patrol resources for core functions and make sure warrants get served, I will work with the Baltimore City Delegation to introduce legislation that would add 100 additional sworn law enforcement

positions to the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office over a four-year period. The funding for these positions will be transferred from existing BPD vacancies. The additional positions will allow the Sheriff's Office to clear the backlog of warrants at BPD headquarters that have not been served, and take on the primary responsibility of serving all court documents in Baltimore. The positions will allow the Sheriff's Office to better support and supplement BPD where needed.

Expand Telephone and Online Reporting

BPD receives over one million 911 calls per year. Through my leadership as Chair of the Public Safety Committee, I have constantly advocated for the Police Department to provide citizens with alternative methods to filing police reports for minor incidents in order to keep patrol officers free to respond to serious in-progress crimes. This has the potential to be transformational.

As Mayor, I will implement a call reduction strategy by allocating appropriate funding for our technology infrastructure so that citizens can file minor reports online. Furthermore, I will decentralize the telephone reporting unit and have those officers assigned to police districts so that incident reports can be analyzed in real time, and follow-ups can be conducted when necessary.

Build BPD Capacity with Auxiliary Officers

Expanding the auxiliary unit for the BPD would provide much needed resources that would allow sworn officers to focus on the violence within our communities. Each district should have at least five auxiliary officers who are still able to serve as a force multiplier for the police department's efforts.

These auxiliary officers will write reports for minor crimes like larceny of autos, minor accidents, and other non-violent property crimes. An expansion of the auxiliary unit will reduce call times and free up BPD officers to be more responsive to urgent and serious matters in our neighborhoods.

Invest in Technologies That Help Solve Crime

Technology plays an important role in the fight against crime and must be deployed strategically. Closed circuit TV cameras (CCTV) and license plate readers (LPRs) are two technologies that help police solve crimes and identify stolen cars. Unfortunately, at any given moment, nearly 10% of CCTV cameras are not operational. We must invest in technology that helps prevent crime and solve cases and repair and update this important resource.

We know that vehicles are often stolen for the purpose of committing other crimes. With carjackings in Baltimore up nearly 30% this year,¹³ officers can better identify stolen cars with the assistance of LPRs. It is surprising that Baltimore only has 35 LPRs to identify stolen cars across the city as a whole. Thanks to my advocacy in the City Council, our LPR stock recently increased by 75%. As Mayor, I will seek to increase the number of LPRs available for deployment on main corridors, while creating policy that protects residents' data privacy. Data collected by either of these devices must be stored securely and purged periodically.

II. ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Promote Public Health

I advocate for an understanding of the gun violence we face as a public health crisis. We will never police our way out of the challenges we face as a city. The public health of our city encompasses more than just illness.¹⁴ We must improve all social determinants of health, including the social, physical, and mental wellbeing of every Baltimore resident, all through the lens of equity.¹⁵ Addressing the inequities that lead to victimization, insecurity, and violence is a prerequisite for a safer, more stable city.¹⁶ Breaking the cycle of violence will require us to prioritize the mental health and wellbeing of all Baltimoreans.

As Mayor, I will officially declare gun violence a public health crisis. Baltimore residents deserve to live in neighborhoods that are safe and secure, where public health is centered and where people of all ages can grow and thrive. City leaders and law enforcement agencies will never do this alone. We must ask what every single city agency and institution that touches the lives of people in this city can do to stop the violence and preserve life.

Trauma-Responsive Care

Exposure to trauma harms the developmental growth of young people. When left unaddressed, this exposure increases the likelihood that our youth will become a victim or perpetrator of violence.¹⁵ With more than half of Baltimore City youth impacted, addressing trauma must be a critical component of any crime reduction strategy.¹⁶ Trauma is also an issue of equity. It disproportionately impacts Baltimore's Black communities, who bear the brunt of a long history of systemic racism, housing segregation, and economic discrimination. This history is reflected today in high rates of poverty, violence, and associated trauma in Black and Brown communities.

School, health, and city government officials in Baltimore and around the country have already started to improve and expand access to mental health services for young people who are most vulnerable and to build the capacity of service providers.¹⁷ As Mayor, I will undertake a focused expansion of trauma-responsive practices that starts in our schools and expands to all agencies and organizations that come in contact with our youth. Massachusetts provides a blueprint for a path forward, where all schools were required to develop action plans for creating safe and supportive environments.¹⁸

Trauma Response Teams: Respond to Incidents As They Occur

One of the most untold stories in Baltimore's struggle with crime is the trauma our residents, especially our young people, experience and internalize as they routinely see violence occur around them.¹⁹ I refuse to allow this reality to be normalized. Under my leadership, a trauma team will respond to each shooting and homicide to triage survivors of gun violence, their families, and their communities.

These trauma response teams will consist of mental health professionals, social workers, community based organizations, local clergy, local mediators, and victim advocates. They will provide immediate trauma support, coordinate community vigils and safety walks, and connect victims with city resources. Police will share information with these professionals to ensure those impacted receive continuing support and constant communication where appropriate. These teams will be staffed by employees of the Health Department and assigned to work in each of the city's nine police districts.

Promote Trauma-Responsive Services Early

Exposure to trauma is linked to several of the leading causes of death, as well as criminal activity, violence, and reduced academic achievement.¹⁹ However, it doesn't have to be. Early intervention is key to mitigating the impact of trauma.²⁰

As Mayor, I will promote trauma-responsive mental health services and intervention efforts in our city. This can range from mental health and trauma awareness campaigns across Baltimore to identifying and coordinating the work of agencies, institutions,

and organizations that offer mental health and trauma responsive services to improve access to care. Agency employees who serve our most vulnerable populations will also receive annual training in mental health and trauma-responsive care under my leadership. There is also a need for funding for mental health and family strengthening services, which I will set out to fulfill. I will increase the city's investment in community-based organizations that provide supportive services to victims of crime. These funds would supplement state grant money from the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention.

Overdose Prevention and Response

Opioids and the proliferation of synthetic pain relievers like fentanyl continue to drive our overdose epidemic. Three times as many people die from an overdose in Baltimore than from gun violence each year.²¹ It is time for us to respond with a sense of urgency.

My administration will employ a coordinated, harm-reduction response to this epidemic, led by the Health Commissioner and informed by grassroots direct service providers and families who have been impacted by overdose. We will work with state, federal and non-profit partners to identify funding for prevention, direct response, access to treatment, and recovery efforts and bring these resources into the neighborhoods that need them as quickly as possible. We must treat this life-or-death issue with the seriousness and urgency it deserves while investing in empirically-proven models of harm reduction.

Develop Overdose Prevention Sites

In the last two years, Baltimore has lost more than 1,650 people from an overdose. Overdose prevention sites provide people who use drugs a safe, supervised place to go, acquire sterile needles, receive health care services, and be connected with treatment.²² The trained professionals who staff these sites would also offer drug testing so that people who use drugs could ensure a substance they purchased on the street does not contain fentanyl, which has accelerated overdose-related deaths in our city and across the country.²³ As Mayor, I will pilot the establishment of overdose prevention sites in the places most affected by this epidemic.²⁴ Our city can and should become a leader in implementing a harm reduction strategy and saving lives.

These sites will build on the promise of the Baltimore City Stabilization Center, which provides people under the influence of drugs and alcohol a space to receive short-term medical and social interventions.²⁵ I will continue to advocate and support the efforts of our Health Department to secure funding to keep this facility fully functional for the many residents that need support and treatment to live their lives to their fullest potential.

Mobilize Community-Based Care

My administration will mobilize temporary clinics into communities experiencing high-levels of overdose to provide people with resources to address addiction, including Narcan training, drug treatment resources, and referrals to local service providers. The Health Department will staff these clinics in partnership with our local community-based organizations who are already doing vital work on the ground. We will encourage partnerships between the Health Department and these organizations so that limited grant dollars can be stretched farther.

Establish an RxStat Workgroup

Major cities around the country have started to rethink how we treat people struggling with addiction.²⁶ Our response must include public health institutions, not just our law enforcement agencies. As Mayor, I will partner with our local, state, and federal agencies, non-profits, and medical institutions to convene a quarterly meeting to review overdose data and municipal policy. These regular convenings will help us close gaps in service, enhance existing strategies, and develop new comprehensive prevention and response plans as a city.

Safer, Stronger Neighborhoods

Crime and the condition of our neighborhoods go hand-in-hand. Vacant buildings, empty lots, and businesses that operate as fronts for illegal activity create an atmosphere that gives way to drug use, dumping, and violence in our neighborhoods. As a city, we can better coordinate our efforts to provide housing stability, make our code enforcement system more responsive, hold absentee landlords accountable, better maintain vacant lots, and end lead poisoning in the City of Baltimore once and for all.

Foster Housing Stability

It is no coincidence that neighborhoods with the most violent crime also have the highest vacancy rates and highest rates of unemployment. The conditions in these communities are the outcome of decades of disinvestment and redlining by the federal government. If we truly care about reducing violent crime, we must commit to investing in these communities.

As Mayor, I will redirect our community and economic development tools toward the most disinvested neighborhoods, rather than concentrating them along the waterfront. I will also support the expansion of community land trusts, which are already being implemented in Baltimore City, to help bring stability and housing affordability to neighborhoods that need it most without displacing longtime residents. Additionally, I will support community anchors — whether public schools, recreation centers, libraries or other neighborhood assets — with the funding they need to continue to serve Baltimore residents. Finally, I will ensure any housing tax credits and subsidies are only approved when they make our city more equitable. By targeting our resources, we can bring stability, prosperity, and safety to all communities in our city.

Address Lead Paint Poisoning

Many of our children live in environments where they are exposed to lead-based products.²⁷ Over the years, researchers have identified a connection between exposure to lead and learning disabilities, ADHD, impulse control, and an increase in crime rates.²⁸

We must recognize lead poisoning as a major barrier to safe, healthy communities in the City of Baltimore. As Mayor, I will increase fines for homeowners who violate the city's lead laws. I will dedicate revenue generated from these violations to the Health Department's lead abatement program. I will direct the Health Department to inform residents, especially expecting mothers, on the hazards of lead and make lead testing more available. I will also ask the City Solicitor to consider a lawsuit against the paint companies that manufactured and distributed lead paint, despite known hazards to public health. Although lead paint is currently illegal, it is still present in many of our homes. These paint companies should help remediate the long-term harm they have caused.

Hold Absentee Landlords Accountable

There are over 16,000 vacant properties in Baltimore City by some estimations.²⁹ On some blocks, the majority of properties are vacant. Many of these properties are owned by absentee landlords in other jurisdictions, states, and even countries. We must get serious as a city about holding absentee landlords accountable who contribute to neglect in our communities.

To reinforce the need for good property maintenance, I will introduce legislation requiring owners of vacant buildings and homes to install working doors and windows to their structures so they are properly secured. This approach has been effective in cities like Philadelphia.³⁰ As Mayor, I will direct our housing inspectors to proactively identify blighted properties in neighborhoods most plagued by violence and step up enforcement of code and safety violations that occur in connection to vacant properties. We have to hold absentee property owners who allow their properties to deteriorate to a higher standard.

Strengthen Code Enforcement for Nuisance Businesses

Small businesses in our city contribute in meaningful ways to the fabric of a community. However, a subset of businesses do not operate as good neighbors, and do little to nothing to address the criminal activity that flourishes in and around them. Too often,

enforcement efforts are hampered by a lack of coordination across agencies. As Mayor, I will identify nuisance businesses and have inspectors from the Fire Department, Health Department, Housing Department, Department of Public Works, and the Liquor Board investigate, cite, and close businesses that enable criminal activity on their premises.

Reform Vacant Lot Management

Vacant lots are not just eyesores, they also attract trash, debris, and illegal activity. As Mayor, I will reform the way we maintain vacant lots to effectively manage upkeep and increase work opportunities for Baltimore residents, including people returning home from prison. My administration will establish a pilot program modeled after the Philadelphia LandCare Program.³¹ In this model, local contractors work with local community associations to hire residents to tend to thousands of vacant lots. We will focus our energy on lots located in neighborhoods experiencing violent crime. Through partnerships with workforce development and re-entry organizations and nonprofits, we can connect residents returning home from prison to jobs caring for these vacant lots.

Additionally, I will establish a neighborhood-based grant program to make funding available for local community development initiatives, such as building urban gardens and parks, planting trees, removing illegal-graffiti, and placing permanent trash cans on the sidewalk to reduce littering. To expand capacity to promptly clear vacant lots that have become sites for dumping sites, I will work with the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services' Parole and Probation Division to allow people to fulfill their community service requirements through participating in cleaning projects within their neighborhoods.

Expand CitiWatch Community Partnership

A current city program, called the CitiWatch Community Partnership, allows businesses and homeowners to register their home security cameras with the city's system so that video evidence can be located quickly when a crime occurs. As Mayor, I will fund a rebate program to expand the number of security cameras available to residents and businesses who agree to register them with the system. No one will be forced to share any video captured by their device, but expanding the number of home security devices registered with the CitiWatch Community Partnership would help our police officers more efficiently investigate crimes when they occur. Residents receiving government assistance will have the opportunity to have this resource installed free of charge.

Re-Entry and Legal Reform

The health of our communities depends on people's ability to make a living and support themselves and their families. However, barriers created by the criminal justice system can make that challenging. As a city, we must do more to ensure the success of people returning home from prison so they can move on with their lives and contribute to their communities. We must also understand the barriers created by high levels of debt and felony records from non-violent offenses.

Support Residents Returning Home from Prison

Most people who have been incarcerated in Maryland state prisons return home to Baltimore City after serving time.³² Our city has to do a better job of providing services to people returning home from prison. If we know who will be returning home from prison and when, we can be more intentional about how we support them so they don't end up back in prison or unable to make ends meet. As a city, we must also hire more residents with criminal records.

As Mayor, I will direct the Mayor's Office of Employment Development to help them find a job and access the services they need to reintegrate successfully into society. This Office can partner with the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, Parole and Probation, labor unions, and workforce development organizations to provide job training & career readiness programs, treatment for addiction, and family strengthening services. We will target those living in Baltimore's most violent neighborhoods in advance of their release.

Develop a Child Support Amnesty Program

While many families rely on child support in one form or another, the negative effects of past due child support payments can inadvertently hurt families. Parents who struggle to pay their child support requirements can end up facing insurmountable debt, arrest warrants, suspended drivers licenses, denial of professional licensing, and loss of their job.³³

Following the lead of other major cities, I will propose a Child Support Amnesty Program in collaboration with the Maryland Child Support Administration, the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office, and the Circuit Court. Non-custodial parents who participate in the program will have the opportunity to have warrants for outstanding debts recalled. They will also be able to pay-off their past-due child support or make good-faith payments to pay down their balances.

I will also work with my colleagues at the state level to review the child support formula. Orders for child support should be issued based on the non-custodial parent's current income and assets. I will also partner with organizations like the Center for Urban Families and the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project, which help fathers become emotionally and financially involved in the lives of their children.

Reclassify Penalties Associated with Non-Violent Drug Charges

A 2018 study by the Justice Policy Institute found that Black men make up the vast majority (70%) of Maryland's prison population.³⁴ Most of their convictions are from non-violent offenses like possession with the intent to distribute narcotics, which carries a felony charge.³⁵ These non-violent drug charges can keep people from accessing housing, educational and employment opportunities, behavioral health treatment, and the social support needed to successfully transition back into society. Barriers posed by felony records can incentivize people to return to criminal activity as a means of making a living.

A poor decision as a young adult should not determine the outcome of one's life. I will advocate and work with our state delegation in the Maryland General Assembly, and the Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy to reclassify minor street-level drug distribution laws from a felony to a misdemeanor charge.

Legalize Cannabis

As Mayor, I will advocate for the legalization of cannabis, commonly known as marijuana, for adult recreational use. I will also put strong equity measures in place to ensure those with a criminal record for non-violent, marijuana-related convictions immediately have their records expunged. The same people should have opportunities to make a living in this emerging industry. Permits for the sale and production of cannabis should be directed toward the very people targeted by the unjust War on Drugs, who are most often Black and Brown.

Removing penalties for the possession of cannabis will allow our public safety officers to dedicate more time and resources to violent crime. Additionally, the tax revenue generated each year from legalization can be used to improve our schools, invest in the resources needed to address the opioid epidemic, and fund community-based public safety programs with a track record of keeping our neighborhoods safe.³⁶

III. SUPPORTING YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Investing in the Future

Our young people are our greatest assets. They are the key to realizing Baltimore's true potential. From funding our schools to enhancing programming at our recreation centers to increasing opportunities for work and civic engagement, I want to ensure every young person in Baltimore can thrive, regardless of where they grow up.

Solid Foundations for Our Youth

By laying a solid foundation for our City's young people through meaningful opportunities and diversion, we can make our young people feel valued and better supported for success. There is no substitute for fully investing in the education of our children. As Mayor, I will ensure the Kirwan Commission's recommendations are fully implemented, expand mentorship opportunities for youth who want them, and ensure our recreation centers offer quality programming every day of the week.

Fully Fund the Kirwan Commission's Recommendations

Educational outcomes have a direct impact on the success of our children and their futures. Without real opportunity, our children are at risk of engaging in criminal activity and committing harm. Historically, Baltimore City has not prioritized education funding.³⁷ This is compounded by the fact that the State has underfunded Baltimore City Schools by over \$300 million each year, which amounts to a loss of \$2.4 million per school. We cannot disconnect the failings of our education system and high levels of crime in Baltimore. That is why investing in our education systems will pay for itself in reductions to crime and improved futures for our youth.

In 2016, Maryland created the Kirwan Commission to investigate how schools were funded and determine whether that funding was adequate. This Commission, composed of elected officials, academics and other experts on public education is the most comprehensive look Maryland has taken at investment in public education in recent memory.

The upcoming legislative session will be critically important for our children and our public education system. Fighting for Baltimore's public schools as this Commission's recommendations are finalized will be my top priority. I will work with my colleagues at the state level to ensure Baltimore receives a fair, equitable outcome in these deliberations. This funding formula must remedy the decades of underfunding that Baltimore City Public Schools have suffered. As Mayor, I will ensure Baltimore City makes our schools a priority and commits to fully funding the obligations under Kirwan. Our students deserve to have the resources they need for academic success.

Provide Quality Mentorship to Our Young People

Mentoring a young person has a positive impact on their life. Young people with mentors are less likely than their peers to engage in dangerous behavior.³⁸ They are also more likely to enroll in college and hold leadership positions. I've been a mentor and the beneficiary of mentorship. I know the difference it can make on a young person's life.

Despite the evidence about mentoring's impact, hundreds of young Baltimoreans are on a list waiting for someone to mentor them. As Mayor, I will focus on getting quality mentors for young people Baltimore neighborhoods most impacted by gun violence. I will also ensure organizations providing mentorship services have the support and funding they need.

Expand Police Athletic League (PAL) Programming to All Rec Centers

During the 2019 budget year, my colleagues and I fought to expand our city's recreation center hours to give kids an outlet and safe space on Saturdays, not just weekdays. As Mayor, I will secure the funding to keep our rec centers open seven days a week so our young people always have somewhere to go.

At every recreation center, my administration will work with the Department of Recreation and Parks to establish Police Athletic League (PAL) Programming where it does not already exist. This effort will be led by Recreation and Parks staff and supported by city employees from any agency who would like to share their time to coach, teach, or be a mentor. PAL programming helps reduce crime and violence by providing mentorship, recreational enrichment, and educational resources to youth who participate.³⁹

Opportunities and Pathways to Success

Every dollar invested in our young people returns dividends that compound over time. This is especially true given the current lack of activities available for youth, particularly during the summer. As Mayor, I will take YouthWorks from a 5-week program to a year-round opportunity so that our young people can access meaningful jobs that prepare them for the workforce. I will also strengthen pathways for public safety careers for interested high school students and bridge the service gap across neighborhoods in Baltimore during summer break.

Pilot a Year-Round, Fully Funded YouthWorks Program

In 2018, hundreds of youth and young adults who applied for YouthWorks jobs were not hired because the number of applicants exceeded the number of placements. This problem was exacerbated when Governor Hogan withheld \$1 million dollars that the State Legislature allocated to the YouthWorks program. This money would have funded 600 YouthWorks jobs.

As Council President, I committed to fighting for additional funding for YouthWorks in Annapolis. As Mayor, I will implement a year-round YouthWorks pilot program to take this program from 5 weeks to the full year. This expanded effort also allows us to recruit and train young people for potential careers in city government. The Mayor's Office of Employment Development and the Department of Human Resources will work in unison to create a school-to-career pipeline for employment opportunities. This includes careers in public safety. Young people in Baltimore need opportunities for meaningful employment during the school year, oftentimes to support their families, and frequently struggle to find it. The city government should play a more active role in making that connection.

Build a Homegrown Public Safety Cadet Program

In Baltimore City, we have high school students interested in careers in public safety with no clear pathway to those careers. Our police department needs more homegrown recruits who understand our city's challenges. As Mayor, I will expand the cadet programs in our public safety agencies by allocating the funding to hire 100 local high school graduates each year. Additionally, there are students enrolled in career and technical education trade tracks with a public safety focus. I will develop a plan with our schools to ensure these students can set out on these careers while completing their schooling. Baltimore City students who express an interest in a public safety should have a direct pathway to those careers.

Expand the Youth Engagement League

Launched in 2019, Charm City Games is an Olympic style competition that engages youth of all ages in a variety of sports programming during the summer. As Mayor, I will expand this event to provide our young people with a wide variety of competitive, extracurricular opportunities in the arts, speech and debate, and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programming. This effort will bring existing programs and organizations that serve youth together to better coordinate resources and bridge the service gap between neighborhoods over summer break. This league can become a national model for youth engagement and crime prevention.

Youth Intervention and Diversion

Historically, we have over-invested in punitive approaches when our young people act out or make a mistake. As a city, we have the opportunity to foster stronger partnerships and better coordinate all the resources at our disposal to support young people in their times of need. We must also present alternatives to punishment in our schools so that our students have meaningful

opportunities to practice conflict resolution and work through their challenges before being funnelled into the juvenile or criminal justice systems.

Strengthen Partnerships Between Community & City Services

Gun violence does not just impact the person who directly experiences it, but also their families and those close to them.⁴⁰ The trauma from gun violence can destroy families and get passed from one generation to the next. We can improve outcomes for young people if they receive the proper support. As Mayor, I will work with partners like the Center for Urban Families to expand access to family strengthening programs and help prevent retaliatory violence from happening.

Implement Restorative Justice Programs in Our Schools

Black students in Baltimore are disproportionately suspended for minor infractions like disrespect and disruption, compared to their non-Black counterparts.⁴¹ This dynamic has spurred discussion around the policies and practices that create the “school-to-prison pipeline,” where Black and Brown students can find themselves in the juvenile and criminal justice system instead of being academically prepared and supported for life as an adult. Expanding restorative justice approaches in our schools can reduce recidivism and promote healing in communities most impacted by cycles of crime and violence.

As Mayor, I will increase implementation of restorative justice circles in our public schools because our youth deserve second chances and the opportunity to build conflict resolution skills. Restorative justice programs have already shown promise in schools across Baltimore because of how they divert our young people from formal disciplinary action and the juvenile justice system.⁴² They can improve communication and conflict resolution skills to foster greater understanding, rather than punishment or a disciplinary record. These highly-structured and mediated discussions between parties can facilitate understanding and give way to a path forward.

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