**PRESS RELEASE**

# Vignarajah Announces Bid for Mayor of Baltimore

**BALTIMORE. January 24, 2020.**

A month after forming an exploratory committee, former Maryland Deputy Attorney General Thiru Vignarajah will announce today that he will run for Mayor of Baltimore as a Democrat this year.

Vignarajah will hold a press conference outside City Hall at 11 a.m. today to announce his decision, explain how this race will be different from the past, and focus on several signature issues — including free college, reducing property taxes, and Harborplace — that he intends to put front and center during the campaign.

Vignarajah will be joined by a number of community members who have urged him to run who are among the hundreds he has fought for over the past few years, including victims of tax sales, families of murder victims, and the residents who successfully stopped BGE.

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**PRESS RELEASE**

# Vignarajah to Stand with Fells Point Business Owner as City Orders Parklet Removal

**BALTIMORE. January 30, 2024.**

Just as he did three years ago when the Mayor shut down outdoor seating just days after he took office, Democratic mayoral candidate and former Deputy Attorney General Thiru Vignarajah will stand with the owner and staff of Abbey Burger Bistro, a beloved Fells Point restaurant, as they dismantle their outdoor seating to avoid an irrational fine threatened by the City — even as City Hall allows most other restaurants to keep their parklets and outdoor seating.

Marigot Miller, the owner of a restaurant that has two additional city locations, will explain how bizarre the City’s process has been. She will ask why the rules are being changed every few weeks, why her store has been singled out, and how the incompetence and unresponsiveness of City Hall is destroying small businesses, not just in Fells Point but across Baltimore.

The press conference will take place at the Abbey Burger location in Fells Point (811 S. Broadway, Baltimore, MD 21231) at 1:15 p.m. Ms. Miller will make remarks and take questions, and the staff will be actively working to remove the parklet around that time.

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# MAYORAL CANDIDATE PLEDGES TO END PAY-TO-PLAY PROCUREMENT

**BALTIMORE. January 31, 2024.**

Today, at 11 AM, in front of City Hall, Democratic mayoral candidate and former Deputy Attorney General Thiru Vignarajah will unveil his promise to end corruption in city contracting.

Vignarajah will pledge to (1) forbid campaign donors from bidding on city procurement contracts; (2) empower the Inspector General to pursue criminal remedies for flagrant violations; (3) require firms participating in city procurement to disclose possible conflicts of interest; and (4) form an independent Citizen Advisory Group that would review all city contracts over $100,000 and make recommendations to the Board of Estimates and the public.

Today’s commitment comes a week after the Baltimore Brew reported that, to redesign its website, the City has now approved giving $2.2 million to the deputy mayor’s husband, who donated to the Mayor Brandon Scott’s reelection campaign and whose downtown venue hosted the Mayor’s reelection fundraiser in October; the deputy mayor changed her ethics statement to disclose her husband’s contract *after* news broke about the no-bid contracts awarded to the Mayor’s donor.

Last week’s news is an echo of times when former Mayor Sheila Dixon repeatedly voted to award IT contracts to her sister’s employer, a company with no office whose CEO eventually pled guilty to falsifying tax returns; Dixon failed to disclose her sister’s employment and falsely denied voting on those contracts to her sister’s company.

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**PRESS RELEASE**

# Vignarajah Pledges to Block Luxury Apartments on Inner Harbor Public Promenade

**BALTIMORE**. February 5th, 2024

On Monday, February 5, at 10:45 AM, mayoral candidate and former deputy attorney general Thiru Vignarajah will hold a press conference at McKeldin Square directly in front of the PNC building (1 East Pratt Street), where Vignarajah will announce his pledge that, as Mayor, he will block the proposed construction of luxury apartments on the Inner Harbor’s public spaces.

Joining Vignarajah will be economist Anirban Basu (Sage Policy Group) and visionary Rebecca Hoffberger (AVAM), who will both share their perspectives on why constructing residential buildings on the City’s most precious public park space is profoundly wrong. Vignarajah will also be joined by an array of community leaders who, along with Basu and Hoffberger, will call on Mayor Brandon Scott and former Mayor Sheila Dixon to join Vignarajah in pledging that they too will not allow residential construction at the Inner Harbor and will not lift the current building height restrictions.

Vignarajah has selected this location to make the announcement in part to emphasize that developer P. David Bramble and MCB Real Estate have practical alternative sites to build luxury residences, including the PNC building they [recently acquired](https://baltimorefishbowl.com/stories/developer-of-harborplace-moves-to-acquire-nearby-10-story-office-building-at-auction-for-25-million/) or the [parking lot](https://www.baltimoresun.com/2023/11/22/dan-rodricks-question-for-bramble-why-not-build-harborplace-apartments-across-pratt-street-staff-commentary/) across from the Renaissance Hotel further down at 300 E. Pratt Street. Harborplace represents the soul of Baltimore, a place where locals and tourists have brought their families for decades. The current proposal puts the profits of developers ahead of the best interest of the public.

“Former Mayor William Donald Schaefer would turn over in his grave if he thought a future mayor would mortgage off the heart of Baltimore for campaign donations,” said Vignarajah. “The current proposal simply will not happen when I am Mayor.”

For further information, please contact Deputy Campaign Manager Joseph Lorick at (410) 419-3229 or by email at joe@votethiru.com.

# # #

# STATEMENT ON MARILYN MOSBY GUILTY VERDICT

**BALTIMORE. February 6, 2024.**

Yet another city politician convicted of a crime of greed is a dark day for Baltimore and no cause for celebration. Truth is, Marilyn Mosby follows in an embarrassing tradition set by former Mayors and other public officials who have operated as though they are above the law. We know Baltimore has better stories than this to tell to the world.

Let no one forget Ms. Mosby is a mother and daughter, and even those who disagree with her, indeed even those of us who have run against her, should find no joy in her fall. Justice has been done. May she and her children now have the same respect and privacy we would seek as they process and prepare for what comes next and as they find comfort in the promise of redemption and grace.

# # #

**PRESS RELEASE**

# Vignarajah Formally Files to Enter Race for Mayor

**BALTIMORE. February 9, 2024.**

Today, at 12 noon, with just under 100 days to go before the Primary Election on May 14th, former Maryland Deputy Attorney General Thiru Vignarajah will formally file with the Board of Elections to have his name on the ballot as a Democratic candidate for Mayor of Baltimore, striving to become the first Mayor in Baltimore history that relies solely on public financing.

Accompanied by a few supporters and family members, Vignarajah will be available to talk with press at 12 noon outside the Board of Elections at 417 E. Fayette Street, Baltimore, MD 21218. Vignarajah will emphasize several of his signature issues beyond fighting crime and corruption — free college, reducing property taxes, climate change, and Harborplace. He will also stress why the election debate so far between which is the lesser of two evils, corruption or incompetence, is not a debate worthy of Baltimore.

Finally, Vignarajah, a former Supreme Court clerk for Justice Stephen G. Breyer and federal prosecutor in Maryland, will comment on yesterday’s Supreme Court argument and the Special Counsel’s commendable decision not to bring charges against President Joe Biden.

# # #

# VIGNARAJAH DEMANDS FORENSIC AUDIT OF ARPA FUNDS

*“The Mayor has treated a once-in-a-century gift as a political slush fund. Squandering $641 million is the biggest, most unforgivable mistake of an administration that has become synonymous with incompetence.”*

**BALTIMORE. February 22, 2024.**

Today, at 12 PM, at 111 S. Calvert Street (19th Floor), Democratic mayoral candidate and former Deputy Attorney General Thiru Vignarajah will condemn the Mayor’s total mismanagement of $641 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds—that includes *both* the lack of timely and transparent spending as the City nears a critical federal deadline that, if missed, will cost Baltimore the remainder of the funds *and* the use of taxpayer dollars as a political slush fund to repay donors and developers and curry favor with special interests.

The public deserves to know more about this major expenditure, and the campaign is prepared to send in advance its presentation slides to all outlets that expect to attend the press conference or report on the issue. Please make that request directly to press@votethiru.com.

Concerned the public is oblivious to how hundreds of millions in federal funds are being spent, Vignarajah will lead a presentation that outlines (a) where the money is headed and how much still has to be spent; (b) the list of nonprofits that were selected (who knows how?) to receive funds; (c) examples of the Mayor repaying political favors and campaign donations; and (d) illustrations of what other cities did with their federal allotment.

“The Mayor has frittered away a once-in-a-century opportunity, padding agency budgets, repaying favors to donors and developers, and feeding pet projects and special interests,” said Vignarajah. “Squandering $641 million is this Mayor’s biggest, most unforgivable mistake.” Here are a couple examples that will be discussed:

* Mayor Scott gave $5 million to Seawall Development (Lexington Market) whose owners donated thousands in campaign contributions to the Mayor.
* Mayor Scott gave [$2 million to SEIU](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https:/www.baltimorecitycouncil.com/sites/default/files/October%202023%20Treasury%20At-A-Glance.pdf) whose PAC has donated thousands to his campaigns.

This is the same Mayor who gave $2.2 million to the deputy mayor’s husband, who donated to his reelection campaign and whose downtown venue hosted the Mayor’s reelection fundraiser.

Perhaps the only thing that may be worse is not spending the money at all. Baltimore is at risk of that, since less than half the funds—some $254 million—have been formally committed, which means the City has only until December to obligate hundreds of millions more in federal funds.

At the press conference, Vignarajah will make three demands of the Mayor:

* Launch an independent forensic audit right now of how the funds are being spent.
* Stop obligating funds in May 2024 in the event the Mayor loses the Democratic primary and allow the winner of the Democratic primary to convene a public commission to decide on how the remainder of the funds should be obligated, which could take place during a special session of the Board of Estimates in December after the next Mayor takes office and before the December 31 deadline.
* Explain publicly how allocations were made and by whom with a specific focus on how certain nonprofits and not others were chosen and why Lexington Market got $5 million.

Vignarajah will also make two pledges himself:

* Appoint a Special Counsel in first 30 days to investigate diversion and mismanagement of funds, referring misconduct for prosecution, reclaiming misspent or unspent funds for better use, and issuing a public report within 90 days.
* Forbid campaign donors from applying for city procurement contracts except with respect to projects subject to blind competitive bidding.

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# Vignarajah Unveils Strategy to Address Housing Crisis

**BALTIMORE. March 12, 2024.**

Today, at 11 AM, at 1052 W. Barre St. (a $1 home renovated during the Schaefer Administration), Democratic mayoral candidate and former Deputy Attorney General Thiru Vignarajah will unveil his plan to address Baltimore’s vacant and affordable housing crisis.

“Baltimore is hemorrhaging people to the counties. The most affluent neighborhoods are becoming more and more dense, and the most disinvested communities are becoming more and more dangerous,” said Vignarajah. “There is no question we need to commit resources, but we also need innovation, accountability, and a sense of urgency. None of that is happening right now.”

Vignarajah will note that in 2015, there were [14,000 vacant lots and 16,000 vacant houses;](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https:/www.fs.usda.gov/nrs/baltimore/local-resources/downloads/nrs_inf_32-15-green-pattern.pdf) today, [there are 13,000 vacant houses and 20,000 vacant lots](https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/baltimore-mayor-to-announcement-partnership-to-combat-vacant-homes-crisis/) — and the City’s politicians call this progress.

The cornerstones of Vignarajah’s strategy include:

* Ending tax sales of owner-occupied properties for good.
* Restarting $1 homes program with low-interest loans and city co-investment.
* Raising taxes on blighted and abandoned properties.
* Using city authority to seize and sell property that threatens to public safety.
* Supporting developments aimed at bringing seniors back to Baltimore.

Also present at the press conference will be Tony Smothers whose father purchased their rowhome through the $1 houses program and who almost lost his family’s resident because of a tax sale.

# # #

# PRESS RELEASE

## VIGNARAJAH MAKES FIVE ENVIRONMENTAL PLEDGES

*Mayoral candidate highlights commitment by leaping into freezing harbor waters; promises to do it again if pledges are not honored within 60 days of becoming Mayor*

**BALTIMORE. March 15, 2024.**

Today, at 11:30 AM, at the water’s edge in Fells Point between Pitango and the Pendry, Democratic mayoral candidate and former Deputy Attorney General Thiru Vignarajah will unveil his environmental policy including five major pledges on what he will do in his first 60 days as Mayor.

To show his commitment to these pledges, at the end of the press conference, Vignarajah will take a polar plunge into the Inner Harbor, promising to do it again on the last day of February 2025, if he does not make good on all five pledges in his first 60 days as Mayor.

Vignarajah’s environmental plan includes strategies to expand the tree canopy, establish twice weekly trash pickup, crack down on illegal dumping, combat lead exposure, and achieve climate resilience. Among these plans are five pledges of what Thiru will do in his first 60 days:

* Introduce legislation that will forbid natural gas and fossil fuels in new buildings by July 2026 (with certain commercial exceptions, *e.g.*, factories, restaurants)
* Provide notice of intent to terminate contract with Wheelabrator on the grounds that the contract violated competitive bidding rules and breaches the Baltimore Clean Air Act
* Comply with the EPA’s order (May 2023) to make $2M in cleanup assistance funds available for all sewage backups that originate in the sewer mainline
* Launch two new free bus routes, one along Park Heights Ave-North Ave-Harford Rd and a second across Edmondson Ave-Franklin St-Orleans St-Pulaski Hwy
* Sign an executive order that forbids construction of private residential buildings in or near the Inner Harbor promenade or any other city public park.

# # #