

 A logo with blue text

Description automatically generated

A blue letters on a white background

Description automatically generatedA blue and white logo

Description automatically generated

Thiru’s “End the Bloodshed” plan sets forth a comprehensive strategy that goes beyond the platitudes and empty prescriptions that have been recycled and repackaged for decades. Enough is enough.

End the Bloodshed certainly adopts and incorporates important components of prior plans around which there is clear consensus — from investments in schools, jobs, and youth initiatives, to better strategies to address trauma and mental health, to dismantling institutional racism. However, Thiru’s plan, focused on solutions, presents 20 unique proposals that are specific, actionable, and unprecedented.

Conduct Simultaneous Wiretap Investigations

For the first time, Baltimore will conduct simultaneous wiretap investigations targeting gangs and drug organizations in the city’s 12 deadliest neighborhoods, culminating in coordinated arrests of 150-250 violent criminals around April 2025, just before the annual summer surge of gun violence. (The arrest of a couple hundred defendants pales in comparison to the tens of thousands arrested every year in Baltimore.)

Automatic Review of the U.S. Attorney's Office

For the first time, Baltimore will refer to the U.S. Attorney’s Office for automatic review all carjackings, bank and commercial robberies, and felon-in-possession cases for potential federal prosecution. (These are categories of crimes over which there is federal jurisdiction.)

Aerial Surveillance Program

For the first time, Baltimore will get off the ground—with public disclosure—the aerial surveillance program to aid detectives with violent crime investigations, this time with specific limits to respect community privacy and confirm the program’s legal validity.

Additional Ground Cameras

For the first time, Baltimore will offer $100 rebates to residential and commercial property owners who purchase cloud- based security cameras and register them with BPD, with the ultimate goal of adding 10,000 ground cameras to the city’s private camera network.

Clear the Backlog of Burglary Evidence

For the first time, Baltimore will use private grant funding to clear the backlog of untested burglary crime scene evidence, which will be used to pursue burglary prosecutions against individuals who have committed robberies, carjackings, shootings, and murders, but have escaped prosecution for these more serious violent crimes.

Launch Cold Case Initiative

For the first time, Baltimore will launch a cold case initiative within City Hall, which will coordinate with BPD, as well as other law enforcement agencies, to keep open or reopen murder investigations involving high-caliber weaponry, 10 or more casings, and headshots.

Anonymous Monitoring of Juvenile Cases

For the first time, Baltimore will facilitate anonymized monitoring of juvenile cases, so the public can better track outcomes in violent crime cases involving juvenile offenders.

Non-Public Repeat Juvenile Offender List

For the first time, Baltimore will prepare a non-public list of repeat violent juvenile offenders and develop customized strategies to ensure they are brought to justice.

Create a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety

For the first time, Baltimore will create a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety who will ensure inter-agency cooperation to support BPD fully in the fight against crime, a post that will be filled by a respected crime fighter.

 A logo with blue text

Description automatically generated

A blue letters on a white background

Description automatically generatedA blue and white logo

Description automatically generated

For the first time, Baltimore will form the Office of the Public Advocate, which will ensure that policing satisfies

community expectations and constitutional standards, a post that will be filled by a respected community activist and civil rights leader.

Dedicate $10 Million to a Diversion Program

For the first time, Baltimore will dedicate $10 million to a diversion program that permits qualifying juvenile offenders and adults charged with low-level offenses to avoid prison by agreeing, as a condition of probation, to enroll in skills training, workforce development, and a job placement program.

Forgive Outstanding Debt Owed to the Government

For the first time, Baltimore will forgive outstanding debt owed to the government by returning citizens if they maintain stable employment and avoid criminal conduct for 2 years.

Faith in Justice Reentry Initiative

For the first time, Baltimore will launch its “Faith in Justice” reentry initiative, securing $5,000,000 in federal grant money

from the Second Chance Act, which is dispersed to 100 nonprofits and faith organizations selected by 500 returning citizens to support their reentry.

College Cadet Program

For the first time, Baltimore will create a College Cadet program to recruit 100-150 graduating seniors each year from local universities, particularly HBCUs like Morgan State and Coppin State, in order to rapidly produce a net gain of 600 officers and forge a more diverse, local, and professional police force.

Lifting Arbitrary Police Eligibility Restrictions

For the first time, Baltimore will drive BPD recruitment by lifting arbitrary police eligibility restrictions, including the ban on permanent resident non-citizens and people who have used marijuana in the last three years.

Redeploy 90+ School Resource Officers

For the first time, Baltimore will redeploy 90+ school resource officers (SROs) from their posts inside public schools to perform much-needed foot patrols in the neighborhoods around their schools, instead of fueling the school-to-prison pipeline.

Hiring Private Security in Limited, Site-Specific Contexts

For the first time, Baltimore will free up detectives to return to doing detective work by hiring private security in limited, site- specific contexts to ensure adequate coverage of business districts and public events.

Instituting Automatic Audits of Over Time

For the first time, Baltimore will deter police corruption by instituting automatic audits of overtime where an officer has claimed more than $10,000 in overtime compensation.

Annual Reports of Public Health Indicators that Drive Violence

For the first time, Baltimore will publish an annual report of public health indicators that drive violence to ensure that the work of all agencies is evaluated in the fight against crime.

Open ComStat to the Press and Public

For the first time, Baltimore will once a month open ComStat to press and the public in order to promote police accountability and greater transparency.

A newspaper with a person in a tie

Description automatically generatedA person in a suit walking down the street

Description automatically generated

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Violent crime is the dominant, defining challenge facing Baltimore. It ravages neighborhoods, drives families out of the city, deters business investment, and destroys the lives of too many of Baltimore’s sons and daughters. The next Mayor’s top focus must be to end the bloodshed.

Thiru’s “End the Bloodshed” plan sets forth a comprehensive, detailed, and actionable strategy that goes beyond the platitudes and empty prescriptions that have been recycled and repackaged for decades. It accounts for the current deficit in police officers and the constraints of the federal consent decree; it builds on the crime reduction plans set forth by others, including that of Commissioner Michael Harrison, which is understandably focused on changing culture, rebuilding basic department infrastructure, and improving patrol operations in high-crime areas; it reckons with the reality of prosecuting cases in Baltimore City where juries respond best to cases where police and eyewitness testimony is corroborated by forensic evidence and camera footage; it creates two new positions in City Hall and promises a monthly ComStat open to the public; it brings accountability and transparency principles featured in adult prosecutions to the juvenile justice system; it establishes and expands specific cost-effective diversion and reentry initiatives; and it takes seriously a citywide commitment to reconceive crime in Baltimore as a public health crisis in need of acute interven tions as well as systemic solutions.

It accomplishes all of this while pledging a leaner police budget, prescribing a timetable for action, and presenting clear metrics of success.

Thiru and his team took note of the various crime plans that have been released over the years, all of which recite similar themes and typically lack the kind of detail the public needs to gauge whether a plan is viable. *End the Bloodshed* certainly adopts and incorporates important components of prior plans around which there is clear consensus: special focus on violent repeat offenders; investments in schools, jobs, and youth initiatives; rebuilding the Department’s information systems; better strategies to address trauma, addiction, and mental health; reconceiving crime as a public health crisis; strengthening families; dismantling systemic and institutional racism; reforming the criminal justice system; and expanding proven programs like ROCA, YouthWorks, Safe Streets, and LEAD.

These are vital parts of any sound crime plan and represent a common foundation on which most agree. On top of this, Thiru’s plan contains proposals that are specific, actionable, and unprecedented. The following are illustrations of 20 features unique to *End the Bloodshed*:

* For the first time, Baltimore will **conduct simultaneous wiretap investigations** targeting gangs and drug organizations in the city’s 12 deadliest neighborhoods, culminating in coordinated arrests of 150-250 violent criminals around April 2025, just before the annual summer surge of gun violence. (The arrest of a couple hundred defendants pales in comparison to the tens of thousands arrested every year in Baltimore.)
* For the first time, Baltimore will **refer to the U.S. Attorney’s Office for automatic review** all carjackings, bank and commercial robberies, and felon-in- possession cases for potential federal prosecution. (These are categories of crimes over which there is federal jurisdiction.)
* For the first time, Baltimore will get off the ground—with public disclosure— the **aerial surveillance program** to aid detectives with violent crime investigations, this time with specific limits to respect community privacy and confirm the program’s legal validity.
* For the first time, Baltimore will offer $100 rebates to residential and commercial property owners who purchase cloud-based security cameras and register them with BPD, with the ultimate goal of **adding 10,000 ground cameras** to the city’s private camera network.
* For the first time, Baltimore will use private grant funding to **clear the backlog of untested burglary crime scene evidence**, which will be used to pursue burglary prosecutions against individuals who have committed robberies, carjackings, shootings, and murders, but have escaped prosecution for these more serious violent crimes.
* For the first time, Baltimore will **launch a cold case initiative** within City Hall, which will coordinate with BPD, as well as other law enforcement agencies, to keep open or reopen murder investigations involving high-caliber weaponry, 10 or more casings, and headshots.
* For the first time, Baltimore will facilitate **anonymized monitoring of juvenile cases**, so the public can better track outcomes in violent crime cases involving juvenile offenders.
* For the first time, Baltimore will prepare a **non-public list of repeat violent juvenile offenders** and develop customized strategies to ensure they are brought to justice.
* For the first time, Baltimore will **create a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety** who will ensure interagency cooperation to support BPD fully in the fight against crime, a post that will be filled by a respected crime fighter.
* For the first time, Baltimore will **form the Office of the Public Advocate**, which will ensure that policing satisfies community expectations and constitutional standards, a post that will be filled by a respected community activist and civil rights leader.
* For the first time, Baltimore will **dedicate $10 million to a diversion program** that permits qualifying juvenile offenders and adults charged with low-level offenses to avoid prison by agreeing, as a condition of probation, to enroll in skills training, workforce development, and a job placement program. (The campaign unveiled this initiative—the “Court to Career” program—two weeks ago with the support of Ravens linebacker Matthew Judon.)
* For the first time, Baltimore will **forgive outstanding debt owed to the government** by returning citizens if they maintain stable employment and avoid criminal conduct for two years.
* For the first time, Baltimore will **launch its “Faith in Justice” reentry initiative**, securing $5,000,000 in federal grant money from the Second Chance Act, which is dispersed to 100 nonprofits and faith organizations selected by 500 returning citizens to support their reentry.
* For the first time, Baltimore will **create a College Cadet program** to recruit 100-150 graduating seniors each year from local universities, particularly HBCUs like Morgan State and Coppin State, in order to rapidly produce a net gain of 600 officers and forge a more diverse, local, and professional force.
* For the first time, Baltimore will drive BPD recruitment by **lifting arbitrary police eligibility restrictions**, including the ban on permanent resident non- citizens and people who have used marijuana in the last three years.
* For the first time, Baltimore will **redeploy 90+ school resource officers** (SROs) from their posts inside public schools to perform much-needed foot patrols in the neighborhoods around their schools, instead of fueling the school-to-prison pipeline.
* For the first time, Baltimore will free up detectives to return to doing detective work **by hiring private security in limited, site-specific contexts** to ensure adequate coverage of business districts and public events.
* For the first time, Baltimore will deter police corruption by **instituting automatic audits of overtime** where an officer has claimed more than $10,000 in overtime compensation.
* For the first time, Baltimore will publish an **annual report of public health indicators that drive violence** to ensure that the work of all agencies is evaluated in the fight against crime.
* For the first time, Baltimore will once a month **open ComStat to press and the public** in order to promote police accountability and greater transparency.

A blue background with white text

Description automatically generated



We know gun violence is driven by a small number of identifiable repeat offenders, typically members of gangs, who ravage essentially the same neighborhoods year after year. Because of this, **dramatically reducing gun violence does not require mass incarceration, zero tolerance, or cash bail.** What is needed is relentless focus on the deadliest neighborhoods, deadliest criminals, and deadliest crimes. City Hall has failed to deliver that focus and, as a result, has failed to deliver justice to countless Baltimore families.

As Mayor, Thiru will drive down the number of murders to below 200 within three years. This will not happen by accident. It will happen because city leaders will develop a battle plan and execute it. Here are the cornerstones of Thiru’s plan to end the bloodshed.

* Launch simultaneous wiretap investigations in the City’s 12 deadliest neighborhoods with coordinated arrests before the killing months of summer.

**Between 2015 and 2018, 26% of all murders occurred in 12 neighborhoods.** Because these consistently high murder rates are fueled by gangs feuding over consistently profitable drug territory, wiretap investigations are a potent, proven method of shutting down the violence.

A close-up of a graph

Description automatically generated

THIS DATA NEEDS TO BE UPDATED; AT THIS MOMENT DATA IS ONLY AVAILABLE FROM MAY 20th 2019 through all of 2020

These surgical investigations do not require police to clear corners or pursue the irresponsible stop-and-frisk policies that have characterized discriminatory approaches of the past. Instead, law enforcement should develop intelligence to identify the shooters, killers, and leaders in each of these 12 neighborhoods, launch wiretap investigations using undercovers and forensic technology, and after a thorough investigation, extract the violent organization, root and branch.

**We know this strategy can work.**

In November 2013, police and prosecutors, under Thiru’s leadership, brought a first- of-its-kind gang prosecution to a neighborhood that had endured nearly a murder or shooting every month for five years. For 18 months, that same neighborhood didn’t see a single murder. Not one. That strategy did not displace violence; it eliminated it.

A close-up of a newspaper

Description automatically generatedA close-up of a paper

Description automatically generated

A similar strategy was deployed in Cherry Hill, where federal and local prosecutors conducted a collaborative gang investigation. Cherry Hill went some 700 days without a single shooting.

This was an anchor strategy that brought murders to below 200 just a few years ago. Even back then, the City tended to conduct these investigations one at a time, rather than simultaneously. And, for the past 5 years, this approach has been all but absent.

As Mayor, Thiru would convene local, state, and federal law enforcement partners, develop a tactical battleplan dividing responsibility among the FBI, DEA, ATF, MSP and BPD, and execute the intelligence gathering, undercover buys, wiretap investigation, and arrest phases of the operation in as coordinated a fashion as possible.

*12 DEADLIEST NEIGHBORHOODS IN BALTIMORE*



SOURCE? NEEDS UPDATE FROM SPECIFIC SOURCE

It is important to emphasize that these investigations do not require hundreds of officers nor do they end in thousands of arrests. In fact, these proactive investigations are best done with a small, experienced platoon of city officers and federal agents led by one or two federal and local prosecutors. The “End the Bloodshed” plan calls for intel workups to begin shortly after the Democratic primary (May 2024), the wiretap investigations to begin that winter (November-December 2024), with arrests just before the summer (April 2025). Rather than initiate a case or create a new initiative in response to a summer of violence, this strategy is designed to anticipate and prevent the violence just before, if history is a guide, it is set to surge.

A diagram of a timeline

Description automatically generated

UPDATED FIGURE

The law enforcement intervention cannot be the end of the work in these neighborhoods. Rather than pushing the violence to neighboring areas, which is what traditional patrol-focused strategies tend to do, extracting the gang will bring about a period of real peace but it will also create a vacuum. New gangs and violent drug organizations cannot be allowed to fill the void. Rather, we must bring to bear a coordinated array of resources and support organizations from Safe Streets and Ceasefire (focused on the violence) to ROCA and LEAD (focused on addiction) to a bevy of operators devoted to expunging records, workforce and housing development, lead abatement, job placement, mental health, and trauma.A diagram of a city and neighborhood

Description automatically generated

* Identify, investigate, and prosecute the worst violent offenders in each police district.

As Mayor, Thiru will also focus on identifying, investigating, and getting off the streets the worst violent repeat offenders in Baltimore. Each police district will use a combination of concrete metrics (prior convictions for violent crimes and gun offenses), along with on-the-ground intelligence to determine which criminals warrant greater investigative attention. A new Deputy Mayor for Public Safety will be responsible for coordinating interagency cooperation to ensure that responsible, rock solid cases are being built at local, state, and federal levels. BPD will be responsible for ensuring that resources are focused not on nuisance cases to drive public statistics, but rather on the individuals who are genuinely perpetrating violent crimes. This model of focused investigations mirrors the approach Thiru led when he was Chief of Major Investigations in Baltimore City. This initiative is all about execution and depends on strong leadership beginning with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Public Safety.

* Launch specialized Cold Case initiative to focus on solving high-lethality murders.

As Mayor, Thiru will create the “Never Forgotten” Cold Case initiative in City Hall, which will work with BPD, as well as MSP and other law enforcement agencies, to ensure that law enforcement maintains investigative focus on murders involving high-caliber guns, 10+ casings at the crime scene, and headshots. Families will also have a liaison in City Hall to provide any information

that can be shared about the status of an investigation that is more than a year old.

This is necessary because as clearance rates have plummeted, murders have soared, with five years of 300+ murders. So has the percentage of headshots, with a startling high of 57% of homicides last year involving fatal headwounds. Murderers in Baltimore have become the most lethal in America, with higher caliber weaponry, more shots per crime

FIGURE ON PAGE ABOVE

scene, and the highest percentage of headshots in the country. The individuals perpetrating these ruthless, calculating executions are rarely first-time offenders. They are seasoned executioners, and those homicides deserve special attention.

It should be noted that even the paltry clearance rates advertised by BPD today are somewhat misleading to the average citizen. Clearance rates are not the percentages of murders that result in an arrest, because the Department includes in the overall count of cleared cases what it calls “exceptional clearances,” a term of art that refers to an investigation that cannot lead to an arrest (most often because the supposed suspect has himself been killed). Exceptional clearances have soared recently, which means an increasingly small number of murders actually end in an arrest.

**“To deter murders, we have to solve and prosecute more murders. Not on paper. But in real life.**

**This plan helps do just that.”**



For years, the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has been expected to effectively fight crime with a fraction of its full force. The Department once had as many as 3,300 officers. Before her resignation, Mayor Catherine Pugh estimated that BPD had 1,900 active officers, though it was authorized for 2,800 officers; this shortfall has crippled the City’s ability to fight crime and generated massive overruns in overtime expenditures. Because of poor recordkeeping, estimates vary how many recruits are needed, but most agree the Department is hundreds of officers short.

From 2002 through 2022, there was an overall loss of 1176 police officers, with 3,873 hires and 5,049 departures. The net loss from 2019 to 2022 alone is 329 officers. The loss of officers has not only made the city less safe, but has burdened taxpayers with soaring overtime costs. CHART NEEDS TO BE UPDATED

A number of numbers on a white background

Description automatically generated

Estimates vary as to the exact magnitude of the shortfall. There are no less than hundreds of budgeted positions that sit empty, though some claim we need more than a thousand more officers. Precise number aside, the bottom line is that the police department needs more police.

This deficit in personnel should not be seen as a problem, but rather, as an opportunity. BPD has a chance to rebuild a police force that looks and acts like the Department Baltimore deserves. In this respect, reconstituting the police force is not just about bringing in more officers – it's about bringing in the right officers and keeping them here. It’s about training our officers to do the kind of effective, constitutional investigations that will restore community trust and get violent criminals out off the streets.

**As Mayor, Thiru will drive a net increase of 600 police officers who are more diverse, less costly, and more effective than ever.**

### RECRUIT, RETAIN, REVITALIZE

1. Launch college cadet program to grow a diverse, local police force
2. Forgive up to $25,000 in student loan debt for officers who live and serve in Baltimore for 5 years
3. Rebrand careers in law enforcement as opportunity for advancement and service
4. Provide bonuses for lateral transfers from other Maryland jurisdictions and returning servicemen and women
5. Lift arbitrary police eligibility requirements including the ban on permanent resident non-citizens and people who have used

marijuana in the last three years

1. Use housing incentives to encourage officers to live in Baltimore City and increase community policing
2. Institute rank of Corporal to promote advancement and accountability through supervision
3. Restore 20-year pension eligibility for officers subject to unjust, retroactive 25-year pension requirement

**RECRUIT | REDEPLOY | RETRAIN**

**Recruit.** We cannot wait decades for change. We must act now. Under Thiru’s plan, we will produce a net increase of 600 active-duty police officers. Baltimore will recruit hundreds more officers, redeploy police to reflect the community’s needs and priorities, and retrain officers who build stronger cases and better reflect constitutional policing in the next century. Police are not the sole answer to crime, but they have to be part of it. And the deficit of officers presents a rare chance to rebuild a Department that is more local, more professional, and more diverse, with more women, minorities, and immigrants.

As of 2022, only 16% of Baltimore’s police force was female; nor is the police force as racially diverse as it needs to be. And the Justice Department has reported that, “roughly three-fourths of Baltimore PD officers live outside the Baltimore City limits.” All of this must change. But change does not require strict rules or quotas. The Department must tailor its recruiting strategy to the types of officers it seeks to bring in, train, and keep.

We know a more diverse police force can drive lower crime and more just policing, and studies have shown that more women in a police department generates higher reporting of violent crimes against women including rape, domestic violence, and human trafficking. Here is where Thiru, as Mayor, will focus to recruit a new generation of police:

* + Recruit heavily from local colleges, particularly HBCUs, with school-year and summer internships, senior-year cadet programs, and an emphasis on building the kind of community-based police force we can all be proud of.

There is plenty of local talent at our local colleges and universities. In 2015, 567 graduates of Baltimore City high schools went off to attend 13 colleges in the Baltimore area. They are now seniors looking for a job, and many of them are Baltimore natives looking to come home. As Mayor, Thiru will implement a recruiting initiative that does for the policing in Baltimore what Teach for America did for teaching across the country. Instead of a cadet program that focuses solely on high school students who are several years away from being eligible to enroll as officers, an expanded cadet program would have a dozen openings at each local college and university for seniors who would be placed on the fast-track into the Department. Semester and summer internships even

earlier in college would expose students to the critical work police are doing in Baltimore and to the senior cadet initiative for college seniors.

By making local college students feel they are part of the solution when it comes to perceived problems with policing in America, we can set up clear pathways to well-paying positions with stable benefits and career advancement opportunities. This is a guaranteed renewable source of motivated young professionals who could quickly replenish the foundation of the Baltimore Police Department.

* + Remove recruitment impediments by lifting marijuana restrictions, prioritizing mental fitness assessments over physical fitness tests, and allowing immigrants to serve.

The department should focus more on psychological evaluations and reevaluate physical fitness tests, an outmoded hurdle that results in far fewer female officers. Also, neither permanent-resident immigrants nor anyone who has smoked marijuana in the last three years can currently apply to be a Baltimore City police officer. These are arbitrary restrictions that mean young, diverse applicants from Baltimore can go to law school and medical school or serve in the U.S. Army but cannot apply for a job with the BPD. As Mayor, Thiru will push to remove these senseless obstacles and get worthy, otherwise qualified applicants immediately into the pipeline.

We know it is harder to recruit police today than in years past. We also know that applications in Baltimore tripled overnight once the Department put the application online—which only happened last summer. If we recruit an average of just 10 new officers from each local college, we are already contributing more than 100 additional police each year, on top of our current efforts. In three years, this alone would dramatically cut the personnel deficit—and it would create the kind of diverse, local, and professional police force Baltimore residents deserve. UPDATE IMAGE

A close-up of a newspaper

Description automatically generated

**Redeploy.** In light of current police shortages, we must seek to redeploy police officers and get short-term assistance from partner agencies. As Mayor, Thiru would pursue several strategies:

* + Redeploy school police to assist with patrol in neighborhoods around assigned schools.

Baltimore is the sole jurisdiction in Maryland with a sworn school police force. While the debate about the advantages and drawbacks of school police continues, there is little question these 90 well-trained officers could perform a valuable patrol function in the neighborhoods around their schools. School officers are permitted to carry firearms when they patrol outside of the facility but must store them in a secure location during school hours. Put simply, right now, we need more teachers and social workers inside schools and more police on the streets. That’s where Thiru, as Mayor, would redeploy them.

* + Reestablish role of Sheriff’s Office in warrant apprehension and community policing.

The “End the Bloodshed” plan requires every available detective to work violent crime investigations. Increasing patrol at the expense of detective work in the name of community policing is a short-sighted strategy. But, to be sure, community policing is vital to Baltimore City. This is a role that the Sheriff’s Office is perfect to play. Dozens of Baltimore sheriffs could assist with community policing, building relationships in the neighborhoods and assisting with local events. This would reinforce the strong reputation sheriffs enjoy in the community and would free up detectives from working mandatory overtime patrol shifts while carjacking, shooting, and murder investigations languish.

* + Accelerate civilianization of the police force.

BPD has begun to recruit more civilian personnel but has yet to move sworn officers out of civilian roles and back onto the streets where they are most needed. Within 100 days, the Department will identify all sworn officers working in positions where civilian employees would be appropriate. Within six months, those officers would be assigned to patrol and detective units, allowing incoming civilian personnel to backfill those spots.

* + Utilize private police to reduce costs for business district and special event deployments.

Veteran detectives who have been reassigned to address patrol deficits need to return to detective work. Patrol shortages can be mitigated by relying, in the short term, on private police who can handle shifts that are currently exacerbating overtime expenditures.

**Retrain.** Building a police force for the next generation of BPD is not just about hiring new and younger officers. It also requires the Department to better train officers to police a diverse urban population with soaring crime and unprecedented mistrust in police.

As Mayor, Thiru will require BPD to develop and institute cutting-edge training modules for cadets and in-service training for veteran officers to better prepare them with respect to de-escalation strategies, crisis response, trauma and mental health, implicit bias, youth-interaction, best practices for body-worn cameras, community policing, and more. Preparing officers for next-generation policing will also require next-generation teaching methods. For implicit bias, for example, Prince George’s County began using virtual reality tools in 2018, tools that Researchers at the University of Maryland found to be a low-cost option for health care professionals, engineers, and technicians. Existing training also needs to be updated with new insights. For instance, police will need to be trained to change the presumption from “off” to “on” for body-worn cameras, so that citizens do not interpret activation of body cameras as an escalation in the encounter.



To end the bloodshed in Baltimore, we must break the pernicious cycle of poverty, crime, and prison. An estimated 73% of those individuals released from prison who return to Baltimore City are rearrested and reincarcerated within three years. This is a literal revolving door. As Mayor, Thiru would break this pattern at four separate points.

* + For the 80-100 most at-risk individuals scheduled for release to Baltimore City each month, develop a customized reentry plan for those returning citizens a full year in advance.

Preparing for successful reentry cannot begin upon a person’s return to society. It has to start much earlier. City Hall cannot assume this responsibility for all individuals returning from prison. But, for those at greatest risk of being killed or killing someone else, the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety will work with DPSCS to ensure that a comprehensive reentry strategy is in place one year before the inmate’s scheduled release. This plan will address skills deficits, trauma and addiction, and housing challenges; it will develop a plan for where the inmate will live, work, and sleep, to whom that person will report, and on whom that person can rely for support. It will impose strict conditions of release so that their progress can be monitored and assessed. The aspiration cannot be to expect everyone to turn their lives around immediately, but to reverse expectations so that instead of three out of four returning to prison, more than 75% move in the direction of a constructive, sustainable life.

* + Remove structural impediments that prevent and discourage returning citizens from pursuing gainful, legal employment.

For many returning citizens, unpaid child support debt—debt owed to the government that has already been paid to the spouse primarily responsible for the child—carries consequences that make lawful employment highly unappealing. A returning citizen’s driver’s license can be suspended, and two-thirds of a person’s reported income is garnished to service the unpaid debt. Under the current system, less than 2% of the overall debt is ever collected. Yet we maintain these draconian consequences, which only makes it more likely that a person returning from prison will return to illegal activities to

make money rather than take a job that, on paper, pays $12 an hour but, in reality, yields $4 an hour.

As Mayor, Thiru will establish smarter, more rational incentives, guaranteeing that one quarter of the debt is forgiven or repaid by the City after a returning citizen has maintained stable employment and stayed out of trouble for six months, one half at one year and the full amount at two years. The City would also work with the relevant state agencies to end the practice of suspending driver’s licenses as a method of encouraging repayment of debt. It is counterproductive and wrong.

* + Launch the “Faith in Justice” reentry initiative to match returning citizens with 100 nonprofits and faith organizations who will each support five individuals returning to Baltimore.

Federal laws like the Second Chance Act provide for federal grant money for reentry initiatives. As Mayor, Thiru will launch the “Faith in Justice” reentry initiative, securing $5,000,000 in federal grant money from the Second Chance Act, which will be dispersed to 100 nonprofits and faith organizations selected individually by 500 returning citizens to support their return to Baltimore. Because the nonprofit or faith organization is chosen by the returning citizen, there is no constitutional impediment to government money being provided to tax exempt religious institutions. At the same time, this would provide about

$10,000 per returning citizen for the church or synagogue or nonprofit to allocate, in coordination with the individual, to best support his or her success. Participating organizations would be expected to maintain scrupulous records and assessments would be made annually, evaluating concrete metrics such as reported taxable income and the number of months of safe and stable housing.

* + Establish the “Court to Career” adult diversion program and a parallel “School to Success” program for diverting juvenile offenders.

As Mayor, Thiru will ensure that City Hall takes responsibility for working with the courts to identify appropriate adult and juvenile candidates and establish partnerships with apprenticeship programs, workforce development initiatives, and welcoming business partners who together will provide a reliable pipeline for qualifying juveniles and individuals charged with low-level offenses to enter workforce development and job placement programs as a condition of their probation.

This initiative will ultimately divert 10,000 individuals each year from the revolving door of poverty, crime, and prison to a constructive path of skills training and job placement. Each year we charge tens of thousands in Baltimore with offenses ranging from drug possession to simple assault. To end the bloodshed, we have to bring to bear the resources we have and concentrate them on violent crime. Low-level offenses cannot be altogether ignored, but diverting thousands of these individuals and their cases to a more constructive path than incarceration will free up much-needed resources that are essential to combat and curb violence in Baltimore.

Between the “Court to Career” program (C2C) and the “School to Success” pipeline (S2S), Baltimore will pioneer a new approach to diversion, using interactions with the criminal justice system as an opportunity to divert juveniles at risk of entering the school to prison pipeline and adults at risk of incarceration for low-level offenses to workforce development and employment opportunities. Key features of these initiatives will be:

* Offering petty, non-violent offenders a permanent extinguishment of charges in exchange for the completion of an apprenticeship program that provides skills and training followed by specific job placement
* Offering qualifying juvenile offenders an opportunity to avoid a finding of delinquency if the individual, as a condition of a probationary period, pursues an apprenticeship and commences a paid employment opportunity of their choice
* Securing $10 million in funding through public-private partnership, to expand the existing “District Court Reentry Project” and ensure that there is a sufficient number of case workers, with a dozen being hired during the initiative’s first year
* Extending employment alternatives by partnering with Baltimore employers who are committed to hiring ex-offenders that have devoted apprenticeship programs and opportunities for future employment

These public-private partnerships will invest $10+ million to expand and bring to scale the Baltimore City District Court Re-Entry Project (DCREP), a model program that currently receives virtually no support from City Hall or the City

Council. That program, which long operated with only one full-time employee, is supported by judges and volunteers and has a recidivism rate of less than 6% — a far cry from the 73% of returning citizens in Baltimore City who are rearrested and reincarcerated within three years of leaving prison. More can be done, more efficiently.

In its first full year, C2C and S2S will help divert 1,000 individuals who are charged with low-level offenses first to job training and then to paid employment opportunities as a condition of receiving a probation before judgment (PBJ). This will require partnerships between district court judges and juvenile masters, probation officers, case workers, skills training programs, apprenticeships, and employers who are prepared to hire at-risk individuals and give them a second chance. Only when individuals complete the program, having demonstrated stable employment and no criminal activity, are they taken off probation with their records expunged. For juveniles, the programs will adopt apprenticeships and work schedules that are compatible with school and other vital obligations.

**“Every election, candidates talk about tearing down prisons and creating opportunity. After the election, nothing gets done. Nothing changes. Baltimore needs more than soundbites, spin, and slogans, more than ribbon-cuttings and press conferences. We need real investment in concrete programs that work.”**



*CLEAR THE FORENSIC BACKLOG*

Law enforcement in Baltimore has to build stronger cases. City prosecutors are dropping too many prosecutions, pleading out felonies to unjustifiably lenient sentences, and losing over 80% of cases that go to trial. To help prosecutors succeed, particularly inexperienced ones, police officers must build stronger cases that will withstand the scrutiny of judges and juries.

Unexamined forensic evidence presents one opportunity to strengthen cases. Baltimore has a massive backlog of untested rape kits and burglary crime scene evidence. As of 2022, the city had 991 untested rape kits. The current practice of not testing burglary crime scene evidence is also an enormous missed opportunity, since 40% of DNA and fingerprints from burglary crime scenes match a profile in the federal CODIS database.

Clearing these backlogs should be a priority. Current legislation already mandates that rape kits be tested in “a timely manner," but forensic labs are often so inundated with evidence that they lack the capacity to test within a reasonable time frame. As Mayor, Thiru will secure and allocate resources to ensure the timely testing of rape kit and burglary crime scene evidence as part of the larger push to identify repeat and violent criminals.

Testing the backlog of burglary crime evidence, given the high yield rate, would permit police and prosecutors to distinguish between, on the one hand, low-level offenders whose conduct is in the past and, on the other hand, repeat violent offenders who may be readily prosecuted for a burglary even if there is insufficient evidence to expect a shooting or murder prosecution.

*EXPAND THE GROUND AND AERIAL CAMERA NETWORK*

In a city without the resources to consistently patrol every block and street corner, it is hard to protect homes and businesses from criminal activity. A rampant illegal drug trade and soaring gun violence have contributed to Baltimore’s spot on America’s most violent cities list. As a result, Baltimore’s understaffed police department has

trouble devoting the requisite person-power to finding perpetrators of muggings, robberies, and fatal assaults.

Baltimore’s storeowners and landlords often keep surveillance cameras on their properties in order to help identify offenders, but these cameras have minimal storage and are not easily accessible.

As Mayor, Thiru will provide $100 rebates for all businesses and residences to install up-to-date, networked security cameras and to register them with BPD. In the event of a crime, police can request footage from the camera owners who can consent or decline. Some are already using home camera networks and working with police to solve crime in their neighborhoods.

In addition, Thiru has pledged to re-launch the aerial surveillance program, this time after public input and with specific restrictions to ensure its legality. While the last effort in 2016 to use the technology in was indefensible and likely unconstitutional, aerial surveillance is ultimately a potent tool to solve violent crimes. Investigators can follow captured pixels tied to a crime to determine where the subject came from and went. When the pixel passes a street camera at a particular time, police have an opportunity to get a closer look. The tandem of aerial footage that traces the path of “dots of interest” coupled with a sprawling network of higher-resolution, ground cameras could significantly improve clearance and conviction rates.

**Thiru has called for several restrictions before launch:**

* Aerial surveillance footage would be available to the police only to help with certain violent crime investigations involving homicides, shootings, and carjackings.
* Except in emergencies (*e.g.*, an active shooter scenario), police would need to get a warrant signed by a judge supported by probable cause in order to obtain the footage.
* Every three to six months, the city would publish a list of the cases in which surveillance was obtained and indicate whether that crime was solved.
* To help defend their clients, attorneys would be entitled to subpoena footage that could be used to undermine a witness’s testimony, challenge a statement of probable cause in a search warrant affidavit, and more broadly hold officers accountable.
* The program would be overseen by a five-member civilian oversight board, composed of city residents selected by the mayor and other community stakeholders.
* Aerial view footage and all related data would be archived for a fixed period but could never be shared with or sold to anyone, public or private, and could not be accessed by the operator or anyone else without a court order.

**“Unparalleled violence demands unparalleled ingenuity, and we must leave reasonable options on the table as we prevent, solve, and deter hundreds of murders each year.”**



Baltimore also needs to build a better network of relationships with its law enforcement partners at local, state, and federal levels, state agencies involved in juvenile justice, re-entry, parole and probation, and the broader Baltimore community.

Under the *End the Bloodshed* plan Thiru will seek the following objectives:

* + For the first time, Baltimore will **refer to the U.S. Attorney’s Office for automatic review** all carjackings, bank and commercial robberies, and felon-in- possession cases for potential federal prosecution. (These are categories of crimes over which there is federal jurisdiction.)
  + For the first time, Baltimore will facilitate **anonymized monitoring of juvenile cases**, so the public can better track outcomes in violent crime cases involving juvenile offenders.
  + For the first time, Baltimore will prepare a **non-public list of repeat violent juvenile offenders** and develop customized strategies to ensure they are brought to justice.
  + For the first time, Baltimore will **create a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety** who will ensure interagency cooperation to support BPD fully in the fight against crime, a post that will be filled by a respected crime fighter.
  + For the first time, Baltimore will **form the Office of the Public Advocate**, which will ensure that policing satisfies community expectations and constitutional standards, a post that will be filled by a respected community activist and civil rights leader.
  + For the first time, Baltimore will deter police corruption by **instituting automatic audits of overtime** where an officer has claimed more than $10,000 in overtime compensation.
  + For the first time, Baltimore will publish an **annual report of public health indicators that drive violence** to ensure that the work of all agencies is evaluated in the fight against crime.
  + For the first time, Baltimore will once a month **open ComStat to press and the public** in order to promote police accountability and greater transparency.

**A FINAL NOTE**

The Thiru for Baltimore Team hopes that this initial plan can be understood as a call to initiate both the “sprints” necessary in the short-term to drastically reduce crime, as well as the first few miles of a much longer marathon to break the cycles of poverty, inequity, and injustice that keep too many Baltimoreans from achieving the success and prosperity that they deserve.

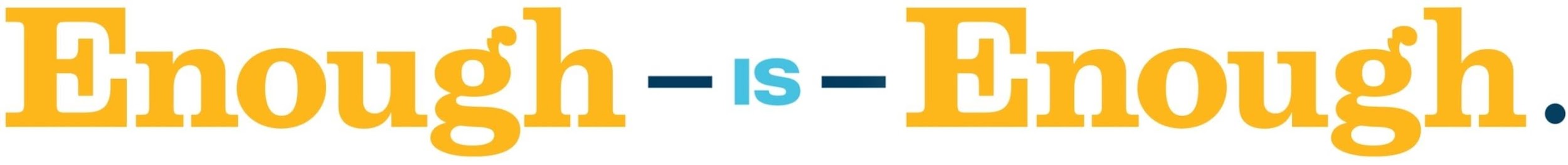
We also hope this document fuels serious discussion about the standards we accept – for our elected officials, our police department and its officers, as well as ourselves when it comes to confronting and tackling the issues that have plagued the narratives about and the realities within our city for decades.

We welcome your thoughts and ideas at [outreach@thiru2024.com,](about:blank) for after all…

***We cannot unleash the promise of Baltimore until we address violent crime. But we can, and we will – together.***











A group of people looking at each other

Description automatically generated

A person speaking into a microphone

Description automatically generated

A logo with blue and yellow letters

Description automatically generated

###### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The global pandemic presents a once-in-a-century challenge to our city, the country, and the world. It also offers a rare opportunity to rebuild, reinvest, and reimagine the economy and infrastructure of Baltimore for the 21st century.

Like disaster relief in the immediate wake of a hurricane, our plan for economic development will require innovative, short-term investments that address the acute needs of individuals and small businesses. As we head toward recovery, our strategy must also account for the substantial impact and unique difficulties caused by the closing of schools and a statewide stay-at-home order. Finally, a visionary blueprint must aim to rebuild Baltimore with innovative strategies and propel it into the future as we reimagine our local economy around industries of the future.

“From Recovery to Prosperity” is a three-phase roadmap across the relief, recovery, and rebuilding phases. Just as we rebuilt parts of Baltimore after the Great Fire a century ago, we have to address immediate needs over the next several months, seize opportunities for recovery in the following six- to 18-month period, and lay the groundwork for a five- and 10-year plan to reimagine a prosperous and inclusive economy.

This plan goes well beyond the limited proposals of other candidates who underestimate the challenges facing Baltimore and have proposed narrow solutions, limited largely to tapping into anticipated federal funding and dipping modestly into the city’s financial reserves. At a different time in a different city, that may be satisfactory to some. But, in this city at this moment of profound crisis and opportunity, the people of Baltimore need and deserve much more. This roadmap begins to chart out an ambitious course from where we are to where Baltimore could be.

Immediate: Provide Relief to Support Individuals, Families, and Small Businesses

* Inject $250 million immediately into the local economy, by drawing down Baltimore’s “Rainy Day Fund” and borrowing against our AA bond rating
* Issue municipal bonds to build digital infrastructure, including fiber optics to ensure free, universal high-speed connectivity to bridge the digital divide, prioritizing students requiring educational access
* Accelerate road repair and construction projects at lower costs and less inconvenience to the public during a prolonged period of limited usage of city streets and bridges
* Complete installations of heat and air conditioning in public schools with inadequate systems while students, teachers, and staff are absent from these facilities for no less than five months
* Stabilize the finances of first responders by guaranteeing appropriate overtime and hazard pay and by offering free local housing to avoid putting family members of essential workers at risk
* Support mid-sized non-profits overlooked by federal stimulus and minimize burden on small businesses by waiving bills on minor privilege fees and extending deadlines on business invoices due to Baltimore City
* Ensure adequate sick leave compensation to prevent essential workers from becoming vectors

Six to 18 Months: Build the Road to Recovery as We Reopen Our Economy

* Commence schedule to cut property taxes in half over 10 years in equal incremental reductions
* Stimulate development of promising growth industries that would become anchors of Baltimore’s economy for the next century, including: biotech, cybersecurity, small businesses, arts & music, cannabis, culinary arts, cancer research, driverless vehicles, port logistics, and tourism & hospitality
* Raise property taxes on abandoned properties to ensure that real estate speculators are induced to promptly begin development or sell property holdings to investors who will
* Cut vacant housing stock by using eminent domain to seize property with excessive code violations and unpaid taxes and transfer it to affordable housing organizations
* Relaunch dollar-homes program with modified city subsidies to banks, reinvest in community land trusts to expand long-term affordable housing, and effectively safeguard tenants’ rights
* Launch Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP) to coordinate investments across philanthropic, business, government, and nonprofit sectors
* Jumpstart inclusive workforce development programs by aligning the priorities of public education, trade schools and community colleges as well as diversion, prison workforce and reentry programs with personnel needs of existing and emerging industries

Five to 10 Years: Spark for Baltimore City a Next Generation New Deal

* + Launch $3-4 billion investment in infrastructure overhaul over the next decade, pledging to match federal stimulus funds with public-private city investments for five major commitments:
  + Major public transit initiatives to potentially include East-West light rail, revitalized trolley cars, Inner Harbor footbridge, above-ground circular shuttle train, and high-speed rail to DC
  + Rebuild green network of roads and bridges currently at risk of collapsing with dedicated thoroughfares for public transit; combined with bike lanes and completion of 35-mile Gwynn Falls and Herring Run trail loop
  + Bring water and sewage systems into compliance with federal consent decree, accounting for accelerated timetable for acute weather events precipitated by climate change
  + New school construction and renovations and repairs of all existing facilities, which are currently twice as old on average as schools across the rest of Maryland
  + Smart city investments including fiber optic cable, traffic and transportation analytics, a distributed network of weather and environmental monitoring systems, and automated performance tracking of municipal services

###### Letter of Hope

Baltimore’s financial health has been at risk for a generation. A confluence of factors – the absence of audits, the presence of red tape, exorbitant property taxes, soaring crime, and no accountability – have all contributed to the economic decay of an once bustling, vibrant American city. This reality has only intensified as COVID-19 has closed businesses, produced widespread unemployment, and heightened uncertainty across numerous sectors and industries. People in Baltimore are scared and they are suffering, many of whom have borne the brunt of disinvestment decade after decade.

The next mayor will need to fight a two-front war: one against entrenched economic inequities emboldened by a global pandemic, and another against the relentless violent crime that stunts our city’s capacity to reach its fullest potential. I am prepared for precisely that.

For some, COVID-19 has temporarily exposed the pain many feel in our city each day: not feeling safe to leave home or go to work or school, or not being able to provide for one's family. With protective measures like social distancing, expanded testing, and an eventual vaccine, we will get through this public health crisis. In the same breath, we will still have to contend with the economic shock left in its wake. We need a plan that will not only answer the immediate economic harm of COVID-19, but will also target the structural issues that perpetuate crime, inequality, and lack of opportunity.

*From Recovery to Prosperity: Unleashing Baltimore’s Economic Potential* features twenty (20) major tenets – some focused on the short-term and medium-term, and others focused on fundamentally reimagining Baltimore’s local economy.

Our plan for inclusive economic growth recognizes the urgency of this crisis, but offers a vision for how we can put to work some of our city’s greatest strengths and assets.

Baltimore’s full promise is waiting to be unleashed. There is no question the road ahead will prove difficult, but together, we can set the groundwork for a future of prosperity, for all residents, no matter their zip code.

Sincerely,

*Thiru Vignarajah*

Immediate: Provide Relief to Support Individuals, Families, and Small Businesses

There is no question that COVID-19 will have a profound economic impact on the city of Baltimore. In early April 2020, the Board of Estimates outlined a $68.7M projected loss of revenue for the year as a result of the pandemic, in addition to an anticipated $100M hit for fiscal year 2021. Given unparalleled uncertainty, we’ll likely see that estimate increase. While a portion of relief is on the way via the federal government's $2 trillion stimulus package, which issues hundreds of millions of dollars for cities like Baltimore, we cannot sit idly by.

Extraordinary challenges demand extraordinary solutions. We must do something affirmative and bold. Thiru would pursue the following seven initiatives in response to COVID-19, bridging recovery efforts to an inclusive, overarching economic vision for Baltimore.

1. Inject $250 million immediately into the local economy by drawing down Baltimore’s “Rainy Day Fund” and borrowing against our AA bond rating

Baltimore already predicts a $42.3 million deficit in the budget due to reduced revenues from changes to our behavior and projected reductions in hotel and income taxes. In response, City Hall instructed all City agencies to reduce spending by 5%. This response focuses exclusively on budget constraints and fails to recognize the services needed to aid residents and businesses in this fight and the ensuing recovery. We need fiscal common sense that both prioritizes the immediate needs of our city and investments in our future, accounting for Baltimore’s situation on the cusp of an exponential growth trajectory. Thiru has proposed a massive $250 million stimulus injection to promote spending and investment, and to support our most vulnerable individuals and communities.

The purpose of the Budget Stabilization Reserve, also called the “rainy day fund,” is to provide a fiscal contingency plan that eases the effects of downturns. COVID-19 has triggered a dramatic downturn in our city that requires City Hall to support our community using the funds put aside for a moment exactly like this.

We have advocated for comprehensive financial audits to identify and subsequently address wasteful spending across City agencies. Correcting that inefficiency will more than offset the funds used from the Budget Stabilization Reserve so that we can expand and enhance needed critical care and services for vulnerable populations.

Baltimore City boasts a stellar Aa2 and AA credit rating from Moody’s and Standard & Poor. Despite the strong full faith and credit of our City, we take a conservative approach to debt issuances and, therefore, make minor investments in infrastructure that serve as a band aid on a crumbling system. In this time of unprecedented need, it is critical that we tackle the gaping holes in our infrastructure and provide assistance and services to communities hit hardest by the crisis by using funds borrowed against our bond rating.

We propose immediately withdrawing $50 million from our rainy day fund and borrowing $200 million against our AA bond rating to (1) follow the lead of San Francisco and expand sick-leave payments, specifically for high-risk essential workers, (2) support small businesses by streamlining and temporarily waiving minor privilege fees and help locally-owned restaurants and hotels by extending the deadline for business invoices related to food and beverage taxes and hotel/motel taxes, (3) offer low-interest loans to small businesses in underserved areas and delay loan repayment, (4) ensure universal internet access, (5) accelerate road repair and construction projects, (6) install H-VAC systems and energy efficiency upgrades in all city schools, (7) launch a public and philanthropic donation fund to support first responders and their families, and (8) extend assistance to people experiencing homelessness in partnership with non-profit organizations.

1. Issue municipal bonds to build digital infrastructure, including fiber optics to ensure free, universal high-speed connectivity to bridge the digital divide, prioritizing students requiring educational access

In response to COVID-19, Governor Hogan made the unprecedented decision of closing schools indefinitely. Baltimore’s students, who for a variety of reasons often fall behind state averages of achievement, are disproportionately affected by this deficit of instructional time. Even without a clear end to social distancing in sight, it is imperative that we find ways to keep students engaged in their studies. Many jurisdictions, even our neighboring counties, have decided to turn to virtual instruction. However, Baltimore City faces a “digital divide” that leaves low-income communities and, disproportionately, communities of color without internet access or access to electronic devices conducive to learning. In 2018, the National Digital Inclusion Alliance ranked Baltimore the 60th worst- connected city in America, in a study of households without any broadband internet. It found that 21.96% of Baltimore households, or 52,084 families, lacked broadband internet access of any kind.

To bridge this divide and ensure equal access to online learning, we will designate funding to pay for the purchase and distribution of laptops and internet access to families. The city should also partner

with philanthropic and community organizations to set up a fund for lightly-used laptops that can be refurbished and distributed to families in need. The Digital Harbor Foundation, for example, recently partnered with the Baltimore Robotics Program to provide free community Wi-Fi in southwest Baltimore. City Hall should fund initiatives like theirs while propelling them to a larger, citywide scale.

City Hall should also partner with broadband internet providers to offer free or significantly reduced- priced essential services to low-income households without access.

Thiru will ensure universal internet access across the city to not only educate our children in this time of virtual learning, but also ensure that adults have the resources to apply for jobs and play their bills in an era of unprecedented economic uncertainty.

1. Accelerate road repair and construction projects at lower costs and less inconvenience to the public during a prolonged period of limited usage of city streets and bridges

Given the reduced road traffic stemming from Governor Hogan’s stay at home order, City Hall has an opportunity to address top-level issues in our transit system: filling potholes, moving forward with traffic light synchronization, and conducting road repairs. While we have released our broader transit plan of substantial, longer-term investments to build an equitable and green transit grid, there is immediate work to be done. City Hall should use borrowed funds to bolster the Department of Transportation’s efforts and hire locally.

CleanStat is one of CitiStat’s initiatives to track the progress of the Department of Public Works, the Department of Transportation, the Code Enforcement team from the Department of Housing, and Bmore Beautiful. The site has been collecting data on the headway made as a part of Mayor Young’s 50-Day Pothole Challenge, which was launched on February 12, 2020. The program set a goal to fill 5,000 potholes in 50 days; but as of March 10, 2020, CleanStat has uploaded no further data on the project’s completion. City residents are still owed action, as promised, to fill the potholes. With less road traffic now than ever before, prioritizing pothole filling is common sense.

For years, Baltimore’s commuters have lamented the frustrating congestion caused by non- synchronized traffic lights. The city has 1,300 city traffic signals, roughly three-quarters of which are designed to operate under one cohesive system, where timers are purposed to prevent constant red lights and speeding drivers. However, only half of those 974 signals were operating as designed under the timer system in 2017, resulting in clogged streets, an influx of run red lights, and more accidents.

City Hall should invest in a timing-optimization program and Intelligent Transportation System technology (ITS) to coordinate the signals of all 1,300 lights, minimizing traffic congestion and promoting safety.

1. Complete installations of heat and air conditioning in public schools with inadequate systems while students, teachers, and staff are absent from these facilities for no less than 5 months

We hear our kids tell us how difficult it is to focus when they are sweating or shivering in classrooms. Year after year, we see identical headlines lamenting students sent home early when the weather turns especially hot or cold. A Johns Hopkins Study concluded that school closings due to inadequate facilities have resulted in 1.5 million educational hours collectively lost. In city schools with the largest achievement gaps, which often have student populations with disproportionate amounts of students of color and low-income students, this lost classroom time is even more detrimental. One Harvard study was able to determine that the difference in exam performance on a 90 degree day compared to a 72 degree day results is equivalent to a quarter of the Black-White student achievement gap.

With students out of schools due to COVID-19, the city has a rare opportunity to conduct repairs on aging buildings that are too-often without air conditioning in the summer and heating in the winter. With proper social distancing measures and safety precautions, we urge City Hall to hire locally to install critically needed H-VAC systems into the forty-seven schools lacking them.

Map of Baltimore City Schools Without Air Conditioning

A screenshot of a map

Description automatically generated

Source: [https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/ac](http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/ac)

1. Stabilize first responders by guaranteeing appropriate overtime and hazard pay and by offering free local housing to avoid putting family members of essential workers at risk

We are forever indebted to the brave first responders putting themselves on the front lines of COVID- 19 to save lives and flatten the curve. City Hall will collect donations from both the public and philanthropic partners to establish a fund supporting these first responders and their families. Relief efforts paid for through these donations will be focused on alternative housing for self-isolation, hazard pay, and a catchall fund for necessities such as groceries.

1. Support mid-sized non-profits overlooked by federal stimulus and minimize burden on small businesses by waiving bills on minor privilege fees and extending deadlines on business invoices due to Baltimore City

Small businesses and startups serve a fundamental role in our economy, and they have suffered severe damage from the crisis. Eventually, will be safe for entrepreneurs and their employees to return to work. But the city has to do everything in its power to help keep small businesses afloat until public health leaders inform us that it is safe to return to life as normal.

At a regulatory level, the city can provide temporary relief for small businesses in the immediate crosshairs of coronavirus. The city could also provide a backstop for small businesses by halting commercial evictions for the duration of the crisis; and both streamlining and temporarily waiving minor privilege fees. Baltimore could help locally-owned restaurants and hotels by extending the deadline for business invoices related to food and beverage taxes and hotel/motel taxes.

In collaboration with state partners and leadership, Thiru will work to impose a temporary sales tax holiday and delay business tax payments for restaurants, hotels and motels, and other small businesses.

Also, non-profits working to serve Baltimore, particularly during COVID-19, are struggling. The Y in Central Maryland, an employer of more than 500 people, was considered too big to receive federal relief in initial stimulus. The organization has admirably stepped up for the community, but it has been left behind with a major loss of revenue. This gap is one the City should fill.

1. Provide sick leave payments for high-risk essential workers

The Maryland Department of Labor has suggested that essential individuals who have not been quarantined but feel ill should use employer-paid time off. For a myriad of reasons, that time off may have already been used up, and – regardless – employers cap the amount of paid sick leave allotted. For many families, this limit means an impossible choice between putting food on the table and paying the bills or risking getting others or their family members sick.

Cities like San Francisco have realized the importance of sick leave in fighting this crisis – especially for high-risk essential workers who might not have enough leave to meet an appropriate recovery period. For those who are determined to be high-risk, or who are living with someone who is high-risk, we will leverage municipal funding to allocate funding to cover additional sick leave payments to match those originally determined by the employer. These additional sick days will remain until the stay-at-home order is lifted.

Six to 18 Months: Build the Road to Recovery as We Reopen Our Economy

Baltimore must act quickly to respond to the immediate and severe consequences of the virus, but it cannot lose sight of a brighter future on the horizon. When it is safe to begin reopening our streets and businesses, Thiru will jumpstart a vibrant, inclusive economy by beginning to cut property taxes, invigorating key industries, increasing businesses’ access to capital, ensuring affordable housing, and developing creative partnerships to invest in our city’s diverse and rapidly-evolving workforce.

1. Commence schedule to cut property taxes in half over ten years in equal incremental reductions

There is no better barometer of the health of a city than its population growth and decline – and people are leaving Baltimore in droves. This year, Baltimore was confirmed to have a smaller population in 2020 than it had in 1920.

A screenshot of a graph

Description automatically generated

For too long, city residents have paid twice as much in property taxes as everyone else in Maryland, which naturally deflates property values, discourages investment, and induces families and businesses to leave the city. With soaring crime and broken schools, this tax rate has become harder and harder to explain. It’s no wonder more and more residents and businesses are leaving Baltimore City for neighboring counties every year. Some 7,346 residents — over a percent of our population — left last year alone. And as the population has declined in Baltimore City over the past decade, the population in every surrounding county has grown.

To be sure, property taxes drive 32.7% of Baltimore’s FY 2020 $2.9 billion operating budget. As a result, Baltimore cannot precipitously slash its tax rate without borrowing from the state or federal government or without significant reductions in services, neither of which is prudent or palatable.

But this trend should not paralyze us. While taxes cannot be realistically cut in half overnight, they can be gradually and responsibly reduced to county levels with a clear and disciplined plan. Thiru’s proposal explains the mechanics of how it will be done, what revenue reductions will mean, how the city should prepare for these cuts, and what compensatory actions the city will take.

* + *Reduce the property tax rate by .01 every year for 11 years (.22 to .21 to .20 and so forth) until it plateaus at .11, achieving equilibrium with other Maryland counties.*

Baltimore will responsibly cut property taxes while improving services by reducing the property tax rate by $.11 per $100 of assessed value each year for 10 years until it is competitive with neighboring jurisdictions. Over the decade, for a $200,000 home, these reductions will save a homeowner over $12,000. Under this plan, Baltimore City will adopt this preset schedule of tax reductions. As mayor, Thiru will require budgets prepared and ratified by City Hall to adhere to this schedule and will fix this schedule in a charter amendment.

Even without greater discipline in agency budgets, there are several reasons why city revenue is projected to grow as property taxes are lowered.

A close-up of a graph

Description automatically generated

First, as cities like Boston and San Francisco have seen, pinning property tax rates can halt population flight and catalyze growth, which will generate both more property and income tax revenue in Baltimore. This is because new home purchases are based on price points determined by homeowners’ maximum monthly payment. For example, a family willing to purchase a home at $500,000 at a property tax rate of 2.2% will pay the same in property taxes ($11,000) as a family that purchased a home at $550,000 with a tax rate of 2.0% ($11,000).

* + *Crack down on fraud and require agencies to identify 1.5% annually in wasteful spending.*

A close-up of a newspaper

Description automatically generated

This tax cut will be complemented by required waste reduction initiatives across all city agencies. Because property taxes account for some 36% of the City’s budget, proposed cuts will reduce revenues by as much as 1.8%. In response, agencies will cut $40 million in waste and fraud, each identifying 1.5% annually in wasteful spending based on annual, top-to-bottom independent audits of City Hall. Thiru will direct agency heads to crack down on waste, inefficiency, and fraud while preparing disciplined budgets consistent with the schedule of tax rate decreases. Unjustifiably high taxes are particularly offensive when taxpayers see consistent examples of misspent funds and fraud going unchecked.

* + *Raise taxes and penalties on absentee real estate speculators on vacant, unused properties.*

Even as Thiru reduces property taxes for property in active commercial and residential use, his plan will increase code violation penalties and property taxes on vacant properties being held at virtually no cost by property speculators, many of whom are not even based in Baltimore or Maryland. This kind of strategy has generated millions in revenue for cities like Washington, D.C., which raised the commercial property tax rate for vacant property from $1.65 to $5 for

$100 in assessed value and to $10 per $100 of assessed value for blighted property. The prospect of increased taxes will either prompt development, raising the property value and thereby generate additional revenue; or the sale of the property to an owner prepared to make active use of the land.

* + *Pursue legal action to seize property from absentee slumlords and speculators on vacant and abandoned properties with unpaid taxes and persistent code violations. Tax increases and legal action will not be directed at property in residential or commercial use.*

Baltimore loses significant potential tax revenue each year because of “hypervacancy” — a term referring to neighborhoods where vacant buildings comprise more than 20% of that area’s housing stock. The level of hypervacancy in Baltimore increased from 7.5% of census tracts across the city in 1990 to more than 30% by 2018.

Following a model adopted by St. Petersburg, Florida, Baltimore will fight blight and generate revenue by taking ownership of vacant property with delinquent taxes or persistent code violations and sell them on auction or to affordable housing developers to further programs like Vacants to Value. In St. Petersburg, 800 vacant homes across the city owed $4 million in liens and unpaid assessments. Pursuing legal action reduced vacant homes by 75% in 4 years and generated $2.1 million in revenue. Baltimore has 17,000 vacant homes.

This plan is meant to reflect a new kind of leadership for Baltimore at a time when taxpayers are desperate for change. Lowering property taxes will not alone reverse the dual crises Baltimore faces. But alongside systemic changes – combating crime and corruption, strengthening our schools and transit grid, and addressing the inequities that define too many neighborhoods – a competitive, common-sense tax rate will create the climate Baltimore needs to attract investment, create jobs, and grow our population.

1. Stimulate development of promising growth industries that would become anchors of Baltimore’s economy for the next century, including biotech, cybersecurity, small businesses, arts & music, cannabis, culinary arts, cancer research, driverless vehicles, port logistics, and tourism & hospitality

Turnaround stories in other cities, like Pittsburgh and Detroit, involved fostering investment in targeted industries where cities hold a distinct advantage. In the aftermath of COVID-19, rapidly investing resources into fast-growing, profitable industries will be critical to jumpstarting the economic reversal Baltimore needs. Thiru plans to devote resources into building up these ten high-potential industries vital to Baltimore’s future:

1. *Biotechnology and Health Care*

Few cities in the world boast world class institutional anchors like Johns Hopkins and the National Institutes of Health. In addition to the rich tradition of research and ingenuity that defines both institutions, Baltimore also already has a blossoming entrepreneurial culture. Coupled with Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the University of Maryland, and UMBC, Baltimore’s promise is limitless. To stimulate the biotech and healthcare industries in Baltimore, Thiru will lower taxes for biotech companies and invest in city-owned affordable incubator centers, located near prominent universities and research and development facilities, for biotech startups. This will include the city-subsidized expansions of AccelerateBaltimore and ETC Baltimore.

1. *Cybersecurity and Coding*

Cybersecurity is already emerging as a massively profitable strength for Baltimore. Several startups with meteoric trajectories have headquarters at Port Covington. U.S. cyber command is located at Fort Meade, just eighteen miles south of Baltimore City; and graduate programs in and around Baltimore have been educating the next generation of cybersecurity analysts and experts – creating an important talent pool for local employers. As mayor, Thiru will encourage and incentivize businesses and startups to find their home in Baltimore.

1. *Small Businesses and Entrepreneurship*

Small businesses comprise the backbone of any successful city. Especially in the wake of COVID-19, small business owners and employees need more support than ever before. To work towards rebuilding after the pandemic, Thiru pledges to introduce low-interest rainy-day loans and tax credits to owners, while organizing the philanthropic community’s resources to operations that need assistance getting back on their feet.

Small businesses will struggle with liquidity both during and after the crisis, leaving many in the unenviable position of cutting costs and reducing payroll. Though the federal government has set up targeted loans through the Small Business Administration and Federal Main Street Business Lending Program, these time-intensive resources likely may prove “too little, too late” in reaching our business owners. Baltimore City must do all it can now to protect its small business sector. In the short term, Baltimore should follow the lead of cities like Chicago, who partnered with local Community Development Finance Institutions to provide $100 million in low-interest small business loans directly targeting historically under-resourced communities.

Through partnerships and mechanisms like public entity and city government funds, City Hall can amplify and match philanthropic and private relief.

Even after the crisis, businesses may struggle to reopen their doors. On average, small businesses only have 27 days cash-on-hand – a number likely lower after the stress of COVID-

19. The city should ensure that loan repayment does not inhibit business’ ability to recover by allowing delayed repayments until the crisis has subsided. Additionally, Baltimore has a number of innovative microfinance programs to support small business growth and development; the mayor should work directly with these organizations to help promote their efforts and facilitate their ability to reach businesses in need of capital.

In order to recruit and retain more small business in Baltimore, Thiru has proposed three initiatives. First, as previously stated, he will streamline minor privilege and permitting fees that are costly and time-consuming. Second, he will pledge health insurance coverage for up to seven employees to companies that stay in Baltimore for at least 5 years. Lastly, Thiru is committed to ensuring that Baltimore’s small businesses are representative of the great diversity our city has. He has promised to provide tax incentives to LGBTQ, female, immigrant, or minority-owned small businesses.

All of these initiatives are meant to be carried out in conjunction with Thiru’s detailed plan to reduce violent crime and cut the murder rate in half. Small businesses cannot thrive in a city with 348 homicides a year. To specifically help small business owners, their employees, and consumers, Thiru has pledged to provide incentives to purchase, install, and register cloud- based security cameras and give financial assistance to small businesses interested in partnering with security firms.

1. *Arts, Film, and Music*

Baltimore’s rich history in art, film, and music has historically been an engine for growth. Baltimore has all the promise to once more become a cultural leader in the arts. As mayor, Thiru will be committed to reigniting the arts industry through several initiatives.

Thiru will expand and support the creation of additional arts and entertainment districts. Thiru recently stood with Peter Brooks, grandson of Jazz legend Cab Calloway, to protest the demolition of Calloway’s historic childhood home in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. He is committed to preserving the legacies of Baltimore’s many successful Black and Brown musicians and artists and building inclusive spaces for the new generation of trailblazers. As

mayor, he will extend tax-free income benefits in art districts to include a more inclusive concept of “artists” by allowing, for example, musicians, spoken word artists, and filmmakers.

From *The Wire* to *Hairspray*, Baltimore has been the stage of incredible shows and movies. Thiru will re-establish financial incentives to encourage television producers and filmmakers to set their works in the city and provide jobs for hundreds of Baltimoreans.

Thiru has also planned to lead a capital campaign to raise funds from private donors to reinforce the shaky financial foundation of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

1. *Culinary Arts*

There are three reasons why culinary arts have become a critical part of Baltimore’s future. First, the food and beverage industry provides accessible opportunities to build successful careers – the industry is the highest percentage employer of ex-felons in the country, and over a fifth of restaurant workers are immigrants. Second, while there are numerous entrepreneurs in this industry who have been contributing to the cultural experience of our city for generations, Baltimore has a number of innovative restaurant owners, chefs, and industry players who are pushing the industry to new heights. Third, Baltimore’s restaurant industry attracts consumers within and beyond Baltimore who are willing to pay a premium for the quality of experiences our businesses offer. Thiru will inject capital and resources into up-and-coming culinary districts and introduce tax benefits for employers willing to hire returning citizens.

1. *Medical and Recreational Cannabis*

The marijuana marketplace in Baltimore is currently a chaotic free-for-all, contributing to record violence while depriving taxpayers of hundreds of millions of dollars. Illegal trade occurs unimpeded as police and prosecutors publicly squabble about whether to enforce current laws, even as street marijuana is increasingly laced with fentanyl and K-2. Medical cannabis is booming, but cannot be taxed and has virtually no licensees of color.

The bottom line: a billion dollars is spent on cannabis products each year, which largely ends up either in monopolized hands of untaxed licensees or violent gangs and drug organizations.

This is the worst of all worlds. Violence is unabated, avoidable overdoses persist, and drug proceeds remain locked in a violent black market. Moving the cannabis trade out of the shadows and into a well-regulated, transparent market will (1) reduce gun violence driven by

competing gangs, (2) decrease overdose death from laced marijuana, (3) mitigate the racial wealth gap, and (4) provide vital revenue to fund universal pre-K, finance repairs and upgrades at K-12 school facilities, guarantee free college in Maryland for public school graduates, and grow HBCU endowments. Baltimore City cannot afford to wait for indecisive lawmakers in Annapolis to take action while the City suffers from the failed war on drugs.

Just as Colorado and other states have issued permits and taxed the sale of cannabis despite its legal status under federal law, so too should Baltimore City issue sales permits and tax cannabis. The same people who think Baltimore City has to wait for Maryland law to change thought Colorado had to wait for federal law to change.

It’s time for Baltimore to lead, not follow.

* Issue Permits to Baltimore Businesses to Aid Communities of Color

When it comes to marijuana, the war on drugs has been a colossal failure. For decades, communities of color have disproportionately shouldered the costs of Baltimore’s enforcement policies. Now that America is realizing its mistake, the communities who were most devastated by the failed policies of the 1980s ought to be the first to benefit from this emerging market.

Permits will be preferentially issued to enterprises owned, operated, and controlled by historically-disadvantaged, local business owners of color and to those who commit to hire employees with non-violent criminal records who are seeking legitimate employment opportunities.

* Require Tax Proceeds be Spent Strictly on Public Education Programs

The emerging cannabis market would produce $250 million in annual revenue for Baltimore City. Maryland and others will inevitably legalize marijuana, but there is a first- mover advantage in this industry that the City should seize. In the past, residents have been promised funds for education from controversial ventures like casinos only to see money diluted or redirected to other priorities. This won’t happen again.

All cannabis tax proceeds will be strictly dedicated to key education programs, starting with (1) universal pre-K for every 3- and 4-year-old child, (2) repairs and improvements at K-12 facilities, (3) free college, community college, or trade school for public high

school graduates, and (4) funding to grow the endowments of HBCUs. These funds will be used only to support new programs and to supplement, not replace, current funding sources for the expansion of existing programs.

* Establish Infrastructure to Manage Complex Emerging Market

The City will establish a commission comprising community members – with the requirement that no member holds a conflict of interest – who will manage and make permitting decisions. The process and decision-making will be fully public and transparent so there are no doubts who made the decision and why.

Baltimore will create a city-operated credit union that holds the proceeds of cannabis sales, and distributes taxes to vital education programs, and eventually makes its reserve funds available for low-interest student and small business loans.

Thiru will appoint a safety board that will ensure that recreational cannabis is safe and free of dangerous additives like fentanyl and will create and communicate clear regulations about when, where, and how the product can be sold and used.

In theory, prosecutors in states like Colorado could bring charges under federal drug laws at their discretion. In practice, they never have. The premise of the proposed approach is that prosecutors in Baltimore have better things to do with their time than to go after permitted, minority-owned cannabis dispensaries based in Baltimore who hire residents desperately trying to obtain legitimate employment to turn their lives around. Issuing city permits and collecting taxes would no more make the sales legal under state law than issuing state licenses makes the sales legal under federal law. But, with ingenuity and leadership, we can still bring the marijuana trade out of the dangerous shadows—where gangs kill over turf—and create a safer market that redresses racial inequities and generates massive tax revenue at a time when Baltimore desperately needs it.

1. *Cancer Research*

Baltimore boasts world-class medical institutions and research facilities that have recently been alienated from partnerships with City Hall. Thiru will support these stakeholders to make our city a magnet for medical innovation and discovery. Thiru is committed to shaping Baltimore into the nation’s hub for groundbreaking cancer research. Under his leadership, we will partner with Johns Hopkins and the region’s many neighboring colleges and universities to find a cure.

1. *Driverless Vehicles*

Autonomous vehicles will still need years of development and millions of miles of training their neural networks with live drivers behind the wheel. The hesitation of other cities, which is already starting to dissipate, presents a tremendous opportunity for Baltimore. Particularly given the critical importance of Baltimore‘s port — which remains a destination of choice for car manufacturers in Europe and Asia – this is a chance for Baltimore to become the next century’s Detroit in terms of manufacturing and innovation. With immediate access to the vital I-70 interstate, this industry of the future is one Baltimore City should dominate.

1. *Tourism & Hospitality*

In 2017, 26.2 million people visited Baltimore, spending $5.7 billion in direct sales and generating $100 million in sales tax revenue. The tourism industry is a major employer in Baltimore, supporting over 85,500 jobs in Baltimore and its surrounding areas. However, travel restrictions due to COVID-19 have only exacerbated the strain on the industry, its workers, and their families. While we must ensure that all employees within the tourism and hospitality industries earn a living wage and have opportunities for upward mobility. Given Baltimore’s location and enormous cultural assets, there are tremendous growth opportunities to make tourism a vibrant economic engine.

Tourism thrives when Baltimore thrives – first, we need to make our city safe. Thiru pledges that his 20-point crime plan of unprecedented strategies will cut the murder rate in half. When we see real change on our streets, tourism will rise.

1. *Port Development*

Three advantages – Baltimore’s proximity to Washington D.C., its location along the I-95 and Amtrak corridor, and its large and booming port – make the city not only easily and quickly accessible, but an area marked for its potential for economic development.

Baltimore boasts the 11th largest U.S. port regarding the handling of international cargo and is the country’s 9th largest measured by value. Our port has both public and private terminals that, in 2018, imported and exported 43 million tons of cargo and is set to be the departure point for 100 cruises next year.

As mayor, Thiru will invest even more into the development and renovation of Baltimore’s port to incentivize more traffic and generate stable, well-paying jobs for Baltimoreans. First, he will ensure the reconstruction of the Howard Street Tunnel. An expansion of the freight tunnel will increase freight clearances and allow for more transport of goods from Baltimore’s port to other jurisdictions while creating hundreds of construction jobs. The federal government has already granted money for this project, and private partnerships can mitigate remaining costs.

1. Raise property taxes on abandoned properties to ensure that real estate speculators are induced to promptly begin development or sell property holdings to investors who will

Given the overwhelming evidence linking neighborhoods of concentrated disinvestment to violent crime, it is impossible to discuss the epidemic of violence in Baltimore today without accounting for our city’s history of housing segregation. A lack of affordable housing in the city often results in inherent instability for low income residents and contributes to the rise of abandoned blocks across the city. Unable to afford a safe place to live, tenants are often forced to either settle for substandard housing or become regular defendants in Baltimore’s rent courts.

This lack of stable housing affects more than just the roof over one’s head. Every house is linked to a community which provides (or deprives) a family access to good schools, quality food, and a safe environment. It is no surprise that quality stable housing is linked to longer and healthier lives. In Baltimore, this difference is visible in the variation of life expectancy across the city - with residents of Roland Park living an average of 14 years longer than those from Sandtown-Winchester.

For too long, Baltimore has focused its time and resources towards a few select areas of the city. The long-term solution rests in ensuring adequate investment across the city so that Baltimore is a united city, rather than a checkerboard of opportunity. While the city lacks the funds to directly invest in all neighborhoods, it possesses strong economic and political tools to redirect capital equitably.

With over 17,000 vacant properties, Baltimore is sitting on untapped housing potential. Several cities in California have moved to tax properties that are unoccupied for an extensive period of time. This diminishes incentives for speculators who acquire properties and hold them until their value is raised for resale or they can command a higher rent. By taxing long term vacancies, the city can push property holders to either increase recruitment efforts to find tenants, or reduce rents to more reasonable levels. Property owners who are unwilling to do this will face taxes that help the city fund initiatives to combat the known impacts of high levels of vacant housing.

1. Cut vacant housing stock by using eminent domain to seize property with excessive code violations and unpaid taxes and transfer it to affordable housing organizations

Baltimore city code permits city acquisition of abandoned property when the property is deemed a public safety threat and the owner of the property has failed to take the proper course of action to correct the problem. Despite having this authority for years, city leadership has failed to leverage their power and reclaim property from absentee landlords who have let it fall into disarray. In most of the incidences in which the city has exercised its authority - it has done so to demolish properties rather than invest in their revitalization or future development.

When done properly, the city’s ability to condemn and seize property can work to the public’s benefit. Evidence from St. Petersburg showed a near 75% reduction in vacant homes when the city began efforts to hand these properties to non-profits, who used them to construct affordable housing for residents. This effort functions to prevent abandoned housing from bringing down the value of entire blocks while also returning properties from absentee landlords to communities who could put them to good use. Thiru plans to seize abandoned homes from owners who refuse to care for them and subsequently sell these properties to community housing organizations.

1. Relaunch dollar-homes program with modified city subsidies to banks, reinvest in community land trusts to expand long-term affordable housing, and effectively safeguard tenants’ rights

*Relaunch Dollar Homes Program*

Thiru commits to finally act on the words and promises of past politicians and bring back the Dollar Homes Program. Under the program, residents can buy a vacant home from the city for only $1 if they promise to (1) commit 100k towards renovating the property and (2) live in the residence for at least 5 years. The program will be directed at supporting local living for law enforcement and first responders, teachers, and social workers.

In order for this program to succeed, Thiru will explore partnerships with local banks and lenders to ensure that those looking to buy a home through the program have access to the financial support they need in order to rehabilitate the property. City Hall will commit to purchasing insurance against the value of the home, then provide lending institutions guarantees that their investments are secure.

As necessary, the city will co-invest to cover any differential between appraised value of the home and money needed to rehabilitate it. By working with banks to secure low-interest loans, Dollar Homes can be made accessible to residents who otherwise may not be able to access home ownership.

*Invest In and Support Community Land Trusts*

Given the disparity in homeownership rates in the Baltimore area – white residents are three times more likely to own a home than black residents – City Hall needs to do more to ensure that homeownership is accessible to black and low income residents. Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are a promising means of collective ownership of land and capital. CLTs are nonprofits that buy land and maintain ownership of homes in the city, and then enter long-term, renewable leases with homeowners at affordable rates. When the homeowner sells, the family earns a portion of the increased property value as a stakeholder in the CLT, while the remainder is kept by the trust to preserve the affordability of the housing.

Examples from Boston have shown the ways in which CLTs can provide homeownership opportunities to individuals who would normally be limited to rental options. In Baltimore, the Northeast Housing Initiative has taken similar steps to build community ownership of property. However, given the amount of time and support these initiatives require, it is important that we look to their long-term value – not just their immediate payoffs. Each home that a CLT secures helps their initiative expand further, and is a guaranteed affordable home for generations to come. Every resident who owns a CLT home feels the pride and reaps the benefits of owning their own home, but also is securing their future by investing in their land trust’s equity. Given that homeownership is one of the key means of generating wealth for Americans, it is imperative that Baltimore support CLTs and other means of affordable homeownership. Thiru will partner with community organizations with the knowledge that these impacts take generations to see, but are incredibly important to strive for today.

*Guarantee Legal Assistance for Tenants Facing Rent Court*

Rental agreements are underlined by a power imbalance between renter and landlord. When facing eviction, tenants often are rushed through rent courts with little understanding of the system or their rights. Tenants rarely have representation and few know how to defend their cases in court, presenting landlords with the upper hand.

Thiru will commit to increasing public attorney resources to defend tenants facing evictions in rent court, allotting them a fighting chance at repelling invalid eviction charges. While the city would be unable to provide a personal attorney for all cases – 150,000 cases interact with rent court annually –

the city should provide a centralized access point to legal resources regarding Rent Court procedures, the status of their cases, and housing assistance services to halt eviction.

Thiru will also support adding city renter protections that prevent evictions unless the landlord could prove just cause for eviction, similar to those implemented recently in San Jose.

*Expand Eviction Prevention Policies and Post-Eviction Rehousing Services*

It is time that we stop considering homelessness a problem once the person has already lost their home. Baltimore can reduce costs associated with emergency housing and prevent tenants from needing to uproot from their communities by expanding eviction prevention policies safeguarding renters in need of short-term assistance. The HomeStart program, based in Boston, seeks to prevent tenant evictions by helping manage the cases of at-risk tenants, negotiating agreements with landlords and covering back rent payments when necessary. Landlords avoid the high costs of eviction, the city spends less on emergency housing services, and tenants can continue to stay in their homes. Thiru will launch a similar initiative in Baltimore, implementing partnerships that seek to provide tenants with guidance and low-to-no interest loans to cover rent on rainy days. By loaning small sums from the city, tenants can avoid predatory lending practices and stay out of rent courts during periods of hardship.

Not all evictions are preventable, and some extreme circumstances will still push tenants out of their homes and onto the streets. For these individuals, Thiru will shore up emergency housing shelters and expand the services that these centers provide without imposing arbitrary constraints on length of stay. Emergency housing shelters should serve as a point for residents to bounce back to stable housing, not a means of keeping them off the streets.

1. Launch Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP) to coordinate investments across philanthropic, business, government, and nonprofit sectors

It is the duty of city government to lead effectively – with integrity and urgency – in the face of tremendous obstacles. We are in the middle of a once-in-a-century challenge that demands an alliance between business, philanthropic, and civic and nonprofit actors. To tackle the stark inequities and consequences of long-standing disinvestment in some of our most struggling communities, which is further highlighted by the devastating wake of COVID-19, we need to work together.

We are fortunate to have scores of local private and social players dedicated to creating a brighter future for Baltimore. Foundations understand that City Hall could be a partner in their push for scaled

impact and systems change. Community organizations and nonprofits have been tirelessly committed to their constituents, and would benefit from additional opportunities for collaboration and partnership. And, many private firms see social responsibility and civic engagement as essential for employee retention and community development – in other words, businesses do well by doing good.

Cities like Memphis, New York, and Asheville have proven the importance of a shared vision of progress, where cross-sector initiatives and clear metrics resulted in job creation, a more efficient city government, and drastically lower crime rates. However, because of failed leadership in City Hall, we have long gone without a coordinated strategic plan. We need to unite our best assets and key stakeholders under a comprehensive plan – across silos and barriers – to sustainably lift up individuals and communities in every neighborhood.

Thiru’s Strategic Partnership Initiative will spur equitable growth and drive the cross-sector partnerships needed to solve our city’s most challenging problems. As part of this initiative, Thiru has pledged to:

* + Create an Office for Strategic Partnerships (OSP) in City Hall to promote capital development in Baltimore through public-private partnerships and to coordinate city resources with greater efficiency and transparency. During and after the COVID-19 crisis, there should be close coordination across sectors to provide care to underserved communities.
  + Lead a Collective Impact Taskforce to convene public, private, philanthropic, and nonprofit stakeholders to more effectively and holistically address the core challenges affecting Baltimore City. In light of the COVID-19 crisis, we will divert resources to food delivery, health services, and affordable housing development.
  + Establish a City-affiliated Strategic Partnerships Fund to incentivize and support resident-driven development initiatives that bring together neighbors, small businesses, and community organizations and institutions.

1. Jumpstart inclusive workforce development programs by aligning the priorities of public education, trade schools and community colleges as well as diversion, prison workforce and reentry programs with personnel needs of existing and emerging industries

With higher unemployment rates than any other jurisdiction in the state and a much higher rate than the national average, Baltimore is in desperate need of new pipelines to success. Thiru will invest in

industries that will put our natural assets to work and create career and training opportunities for everyone from PhDs at Hopkins to individuals entering the workforce without a GED.

In order to help curb recidivism and to meet individuals returning to society from prison with an apprenticeship and a job, Thiru will scale proven programs, such as the District Court Re-Entry Project, and launch both the Court to Career Program and School to Success Initiative. He has already proposed his Court to Career (C2C) Program, which is an adult diversion initiative; along with its parallel program, School to Success (S2S), which is purposed for diverting juvenile offenders. Both programs match individuals with employment opportunities with room for advancement and growth.

In its first full year, C2C and S2S will help divert 1,000 individuals who are charged with low-level offenses from the revolving door of poverty, crime, and prison to a constructive path of job training and paid employment opportunities as a condition of receiving a probation before judgment (PBJ). This will require partnerships between district court judges and juvenile masters, probation officers, case workers, skills training programs, apprenticeships, and employers who are prepared to hire at-risk individuals and give them a second chance. Only when individuals complete the program, having demonstrated stable employment and no criminal activity, are they taken off probation with their records expunged.

For juveniles, the programs will adopt apprenticeships and work schedules that are compatible with school and other vital obligations. School to Success will prioritize programs geared to all facets of enterprise and academic achievement. Thiru will ensure expanded opportunities for vocational school instruction, university-level coursework, and internships/apprenticeships, making them more readily accessible to students completing their junior and senior years of high school.

Five to 10 Years: Spark for Baltimore City a “Next Generation New Deal”

From forging the first leg of the American railroad to mapping the stars with the Hubble Space Telescope, Baltimore’s history is defined by industry and innovation. Though our city has suffered from job erosion and disinvestment, Baltimore’s potential is tremendous. We are a city that pioneers the cutting-edge of medicine, launches next-generation businesses, and sets the standard for creativity in the arts. Our restaurants make headlines while creating community. We welcome immigrants while celebrating businesses that have thrived in Baltimore for generations. Baltimore has nearly 14,000 businesses, both big and small; and one third of our labor force – one of the highest percentages in the country – devotes their careers to service through the nonprofit sector. We are a city shaped by individuals dedicated to the promise of progress.

Thiru will offer Baltimore a New Deal for the next generation by injecting a massive stimulus investment, redesigning our transit network and water – sewage system, rebuilding our crumbling schools, and leading the nation in smart city innovations. This “Next Generation New Deal” will help unleash our city’s full promise, a promise of prosperity and equity, hope and opportunity.

1. Launch massive $3-4 billion investment in infrastructure overhaul over the next decade, pledging to match federal stimulus funds with public-private city investments for five major commitments.

As Baltimore ushers in a new era of economic development, City Hall must begin a second round of infrastructure investments. Thiru has pledged to match federal stimulus funds granted to the city by again borrowing against the city’s AA municipal bond rating, this time a sum of $3.5 billion, to invest over a five – 10-year period. This will be supplemented by leveraging philanthropic partnerships and coordinating with investors and businesses.

The funds will go towards five major initiatives: (1) the design and construction of a green transit network, (2) building a water/waste system that is in compliance with the federal consent decree, (3) launching massive renovations of city schools, (4) constructing an equitable transit grid, and (5) beginning smart city investments.

1. Major public transit initiatives to potentially include East-West light rail, revitalized trolley cars, Inner Harbor footbridge, above-ground circular shuttle train, and high-speed rail to DC

Due to necessary social distancing guidelines, Baltimore’s transit system has significantly decreased its operations by limiting lines and routes. Once the COVID-19 crisis subsides, Thiru will work with state and local transit authorities to restore Baltimore’s transit system to greater capacity than before the public health crisis, creating an equitable transit grid while also offering an array of new employment opportunities at all levels.

Thiru will prioritize two major public works projects: expanding free circulator routes to include major west-to-east corridors and critical arteries to historically disinvested neighborhoods; and leading the charge to build the primary route of America’s first high-speed rail line, connecting Baltimore and Washington, D.C. These projects will lay the groundwork for the exploration of other transit alternatives, from a revitalized trolley car system to an above ground circulator to gondolas to a footbridge across the harbor.A graph of unemployment rates

Description automatically generated

The city's free transit system—the Charm City Circulator—is designed by Visit Baltimore, which is a 501c6 with municipal and corporate partners, designed specifically to market the city—not to provide widespread

public transit. We need to reform the purpose of free-fare buses to specifically target riders who lack alternative transit options. Expanding free circulator routes to East-West corridors and major arterial roadways like Pennsylvania Avenue and Harford Road will reduce pollution as ridership increases, reduce commute times, make the City more accessible, and facilitate economic development by providing realistic transportation to job centers and employers. Economic empowerment through transit is critical to Baltimore, which suffers higher unemployment rates than neighboring jurisdictions. Thiru will lobby to start construction of the proposed 14-mile East-West transit line between Baltimore County and downtown, connecting the Light Rail, Metro Subway, and MARC train and instituting a comprehensive transit grid.

Thiru will lead the fight to break ground on the first American leg of high-speed rail connecting DC and Baltimore with a 13-minute bullet train, guaranteeing substantially discounted commuter fares based on income, and induce competitive, international bidding to reduce overall project costs.

1. Rebuild green network of roads and bridges, which are currently at risk of collapsing, with dedicated thoroughfares for public transit, combined with bike lanes and completion of 35-mile Gwynn Falls and Herring Run trail loop

Thiru will execute a Complete Streets redesign that considers the racial and socioeconomic equity of our roads and bridges. This will enable safe pedestrian traffic across the city, including East-West avenues reserved exclusively for green and active transit: pedestrians, bikes, scooters, and buses.

In addition to planning designated bike lanes and green transit avenues, Thiru will fund the creation of the Gwynns Falls Trail and Herring Run Trail 35-mile trail loop will integrate transit and nature by connecting 80% of neighborhoods to greenspace and recreational trails.

1. Bring water and sewage systems into compliance with federal consent decree, accounting for accelerated timetable for acute weather events precipitated by climate change

Our water infrastructure is crumbling, in violation of federal law and posing a grave public health risk. Faulty, cracked sewer systems caused the 32,000 gallon sewage leak into Jones Falls, a waterway into the Chesapeake Bay. Pipes inundated after a big rainfall lace sewage with stormwater, entering our waterways and taking a toll on local wildlife.

1. New school construction and renovations and repairs of all existing facilities, which are currently twice as old, on average, as schools across the rest of Maryland

City public school students are substantially disadvantaged by old buildings, facilities, and equipment as well as inadequate school supplies and resources. In addition to bond-supported funds for new school construction, Thiru will commit $100 million to finance discretionary maintenance and

renovations, earmarking funds for next-century educational infrastructure (e.g., platforms for robust remote learning).

Spending on education has the highest return of any investment in public goods or services. Education spending is about investing with low-cost capital now to generate future tax revenue and savings in areas like health and criminal justice. Using available social financing tools and leveraging opportunities for impact investing, Baltimore can rebuild, revitalize, and reimagine its education system with funds from an array of private sources.

1. Smart city investments including fiber optic cable, traffic and transportation analytics, a distributed network of weather and environmental monitoring systems, and automated performance tracking of municipal services

Thiru will usher Baltimore into a new era of technology and innovation as well as introduce major structural changes to city infrastructure that use data analytics to cut waste and promote efficiency. Following the leadership of cities around the world, Thiru will begin massive data collection on traffic patterns, utility (internet, water) usage, and environmental and weather patterns to then digitally transform our systems and procedures.

Around the world, investments into digitalization and “smart” technology have been proven to save money. Barcelona reported savings of more than €75 million (over $81 million) following infrastructure investments in smart water, lighting, and parking. There is massive opportunity for local job creation and industry development, transforming Baltimore into a hub for technological innovation.A city with lights on it

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Barcelona Smart City

In the short-term, Thiru will invest in a timing-optimization program and Intelligent Transportation System technology (ITS) to coordinate the signals of Baltimore’s 1,300 traffic signals, minimizing traffic congestion and promoting safety.

Thiru also plans to develop a citywide, digitized pothole detection program. We will use sensors attached to city-owned vehicles, which naturally traverse the city, to measure width, depth, and severity of potholes; and then log that data into a publicly-available system. This monitoring serves as a measure of accountability, ensuring that the public can track and visualize the completion of 311 calls and that the most severe and significant potholes are filled first.

Baltimore’s current water billing system is inherently flawed, and notoriously issues exorbitantly high bills to residents resulting from undetected, yet often preventable, leaks. When a resident sees a high bill and calls in to complain, the Department of Public Works (DPW) examines hourly water usage; if the meter is constantly running all day and all night long, DPW naturally concludes there may be a leak, big or small, and then takes action. But there is no reason DPW should wait for residents to call-in about data DPW already has in its possession. As mayor, Thiru will implement computer monitoring of hourly meter rates to detect sudden spikes in usage or constant water flow that are symptoms of water leaks. Leaks left undetected and unattended, combined with crumbling infrastructure, have direct consequences – like Poe Homes being left without water for weeks, and recurring stories about sinkholes developing in and around our city. Catching leaks early and taking steps to fix them will reduce costs for the city, save families money, and lower the risk of catastrophic water main breaks.

Thiru will lead the effort for universal fiber optic internet infrastructure made free for public consumption. He will initiate competitive bidding among providers before laying the groundwork to ensure coverage in all neighborhoods, making Baltimore the national leader in internet accessibility.

Smart technology can be designed to serve two purposes: to reduce energy consumption and promote sustainability, and to reduce operation costs. Thiru will install LED bulbs into streetlights, which can be dimmed and brightened in accordance with data on location, weather, and time of day. City Hall will also prioritize research and data collection on air pollution and waste management in order to develop the cleanest possible policies and procedures.

###### A FINAL NOTE

We will make Baltimore all it can be by building an economy that works for all of us – in all neighborhoods, across all walks of life. Acting on this clear, inclusive vision is exponentially more important as we enter a period of economic uncertainty resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our campaign knows that low-income and minority communities are hit harder by the virus, and will face the brunt of the economic challenges it brings. Implementing long-term investments through these three-phase initiatives will directly support those most impacted by the crisis in the short-term, while ushering in a new era for Baltimore’s economy as we move to a brighter future. *The city that built the first leg of the American Railroad can once again be a nationwide leader in innovation and development. Thiru is the leader to get us there.*

A collage of people walking in a city

Description automatically generated



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Baltimore’s public schools are failing. Enrollment is falling precipitously. City school buildings are, on average, twice as old as facilities everywhere else in Maryland. Every year children languish in classrooms without air conditioning and shiver in classrooms without heat. Violence, health hazards, and low expectations follow our kids into the classroom.

Far too many of Baltimore’s schools are divided by race and class, just as they were before *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark Supreme Court decision fought and won by a native son of Baltimore, Thurgood Marshall, that promised the end of segregation in schools. We have broken the promise of Brown. Baltimore schools do not provide the equal public education imagined by Justice Marshall -- they are not worthy of the city that raised the young man who would become one of the greatest Justices in American history.

We must fully fund the Kirwan Commission's proposals. That said, there are additional systemic and external factors that have held our schools back and demand sweeping reforms. We cannot rely on Annapolis to put forth all of the solutions. Thiru Vignarajah’s Education for All plan offers a roadmap to transform city schools into centers of learning that we could be proud of. Repairing broken schools may take a generation, but these are concrete steps that will raise expectations for our children's education.

**Counteract Declining Public-School Enrollment & Keep Students in Public Schools**

1. Deliver free universal pre-k for three- and four-year-old children
2. Guarantee debt-free college for every graduate of a Baltimore City public school at any institution in Maryland, including community colleges, trade schools, and public and private universities

**Reimagine the Role of Public Schools in Community Life**

1. Create a Deputy Mayor for Education to ensure interagency cooperation
2. Transition all K-8 public schools into community schools, allotting $1 million in funding for community school coordinators and programming at each school
3. Replace School Family Councils with Local School Boards focused on parental and community engagement
4. Follow the example of Indianapolis to become the second city in America to grant mayoral authority to approve charter schools, in order to expand choice options
5. Increase the flow of charter school funding from central administrators to charter school operators
6. Normalize extended-day and year-round instruction

**Improve the Quality of Education Delivered in Baltimore’s Schools**

1. Renovate crumbling infrastructure and install HVAC systems in all schools without one
2. Increase teacher recruitment and retention with advancement opportunities
3. Place an extra adult resource in every classroom at schools with the highest need
4. Prioritize restorative justice and redirect school police officers out of classrooms and into communities
5. Equip administrators and educators with the resources and training required to offer consistent, personal trauma-sensitive support and instruction
6. Expand programs for enterprising students to accelerate their education with trade school instruction, university-level coursework, or apprenticeships during their junior and senior year of high school
7. Prioritize student advocacy in the development of individualized education plans
8. Offer stipends to local artists and musicians who will devote time to schools lacking art and music programs
9. Launch financial literacy educational programs in all high schools

**Close the Digital Divide and Provide Online Learning Access**

1. Provide electronic devices conducive to digital learning to households in need
2. Guarantee high-speed internet access in all neighborhoods

**How do We Pay for It?**

1. Cannabis taxation and regulation
2. Public-Private Partnership
3. Budget Reprioritization



Student enrollment in public schools continues to decline; this is both a cause and consequence of our system’s struggles -- from relentless crime to poverty to homelessness. Our commitment to universal pre-k and debt-free college for city high school graduates will not only benefit the students, but will also encourage families planning to move out of Baltimore City public school districts to reconsider their decision. Fostering an academic environment competitive with surrounding counties and boosting enrollment numbers are key to **changing the perception and reality of Baltimore schools.**

* 1. **Guarantee free universal pre-k for three- and four-year-old children**

The achievement gap between Baltimore City Public School (BCPS) students and students in surrounding county school districts is evident early on, and the disparity increases as they grow older. In 2022-2023, testing revealed that only 42% of Baltimore City kindergarteners’ test scores reflected adequate preparation for kindergarten, and readiness was significantly less common among children of immigrant parents, children with disabilities, and children from low-income households. In fact, only one- third of low-income students were reported to be prepared for kindergarten. These disparities, while present throughout the state, are significantly intensified in Baltimore City.



Graphical Update needed

Without access to high quality pre-k, students arrive in kindergarten already behind their peers. It is difficult to play catch-up. Universal pre-k for three and four year-olds provides a substantial initial advantage in academic achievement and the investment in early education compounds year after year. This is a trajectory that will improve the collective cultures of our elementary grades and all subsequent school years. Baltimore City will become the next jurisdiction to guarantee free, universal pre-k for all three and four-year- olds. Cities like Tulsa, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C. have seen tremendous success in their respective early education programs, with lasting educational results well beyond elementary school.

There are proven benefits to universal pre-k that will accelerate students’ socio-emotional

development, academic skill sets, and address larger community issues. The gains in

achievement children acquire during pre-k correlate with lower crime rates, higher lifetime

earnings, and better health prospects. In the short-term, guaranteeing universal pre-k

dramatically reduces family expenses and has increased the number of women, especially

women of color, returning to work sooner than otherwise possible after childbirth. In

Washington, D.C., the labor force participation rate for low-income mothers increased

dramatically from 40% to 55% after the implementation of universal early education.

Offering universal pre-k will also encourage families to stay in Baltimore even once their

children move onto their K-12 education. Pre-k begins to foster collective parental

engagement, through which parents and families become connected and invested in their

children’s education. These bonds promote parental advocacy in the school system and

strengthen communities. Collective parental engagement beginning in and centered around

pre-k can become a key factor that families consider in their choice to keep their kids in

Baltimore City schools instead of relocating to neighboring counties, seeking to retain the

structural support formed at the onset of their child’s education. Implementing universal pre-

k is crucial in bolstering continual enrollment into city public schools, subsequently increasing

state-allocated education funding, part of which is directly tied to student population.

Baltimore City currently uses a priority system in order to determine which children are

eligible for city-funded pre-k and enrollment is limited. Children must reach the age of four

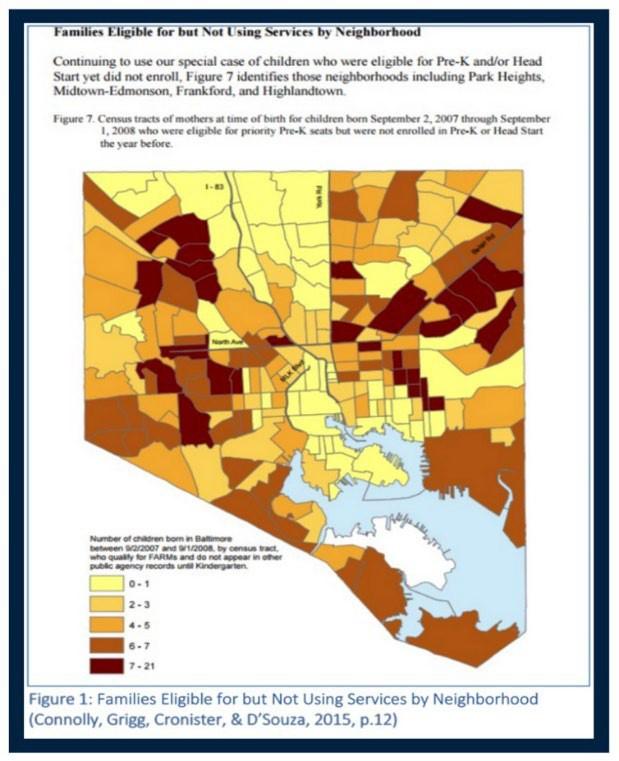
by September of the school year if they wish to be enrolled and must be considered low

income, homeless, or in need of special education services in order to qualify under Priority

1 status. Even if a child is considered Priority 1, space is not guaranteed. Our plan for

universal pre-k eliminates this inconsistency and ensures equal educational opportunity

entering kindergarten.

These programs are only as meaningful as their 

accompanying outreach programs are

effective. Pre-existing programs, such as Head

Start, have been massively underutilized in

Baltimore City. In a longitudinal study for 9,694

children born in Baltimore City, the Baltimore

Educational Research Consortium found that

there was low enrollment among qualifying

children who live in areas that have seen historic

disinvestment and that have predominately

black populations.

We will launch targeted outreach programs in

these communities to inform parents and

caretakers of the city’s free 3/4 pre-K program,

partnering with local health institutions, faith

organizations, libraries, and community

stakeholders.

* 1. **Guarantee debt-free college for every graduate of a Baltimore City public school at any institution in Maryland, including community colleges, trade schools, and public and private universities**

Baltimore City’s investment in our children cannot end at high school graduation. Baltimore will make college or trade school at any institution in Maryland (including tuition and room and board) debt-free for every graduate of a Baltimore City public high school. This will make Baltimore City the first jurisdiction in the United States to guarantee both tuition and room and board at any state institution. Under this plan, graduates of Baltimore City public schools will be entitled to one debt-free year of college education at a Maryland institution for each year they complete in a Baltimore City public high school. Thus, a student who attends four years of a city school will be entitled to a corresponding four years of continued education. The promise of debt-free college is a promise to our kids that we believe they can succeed.

Providing this incentive for every graduate of Baltimore City public high schools is likely to

increase both graduation rates and school funding. Baltimore City has long suffered

graduation rates much lower than its surrounding counties and the rest of the state. In 2021-

2022, the Baltimore City high school graduation rate was 68.65%; comparatively, the high school

graduation rate for Maryland was 85.81% (2023). As enrollment increases in response to the

promise of debt-free higher education, funding for schools will subsequently increase. Debt-

free college education will remove a financial barrier that may prohibit young adults from

contemplating the opportunities that higher education presents.

This is certainly an investment, but it is also not as expensive an investment as one might

think. First, collegiate enrollment rates among graduating seniors is low; in 2015, only 43.6%

enrolled in either two-year or four-year higher learning institutions and only X students

graduate from Baltimore City public schools each year. Second, the cost of college is

relatively low when considering substantive financial aid grants and the city’s pre-existing

collegiate financing programs. Community colleges are already free, and cost

approximately $6,044 per student per year; and the in-county average tuition is $4,324.

Similarly, trade schools average at $6,536 per student per year, in-state tuition for public

universities in the state of Maryland range from $15,522 to $24,051 per person per year,

and even private universities, which can be much more expensive, offer significant financial

aid, especially to students of Baltimore City, many of whom face significant financial

hardships.



1. **Create a Deputy Mayor for Education to ensure interagency cooperation in support of city schools**

A new Deputy Mayor for Education will be responsible for ensuring that every city agency is doing its part to make sure that our kids are educated. From ensuring equitable and safe public transit options to schools to increasing affordable housing options, this position is all about a holistic governmental approach to transforming public schools and depends on strong leadership, beginning with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Education.

1. **Phase all K-8 public schools into community schools with $1 million in funding for community school coordinators and programming at each school**

Elementary schools can serve as far more than places where students go to learn. When transformed into community schools, these spaces are cornerstones of community life— enhancing the lives of children, their families, and older adults in their area through a range of educational, developmental, and cultural initiatives. Most models that employ schools as community centers revolve around a trained, local facilitator who coordinates and manages a variety of engagement initiatives and programs that take place outside of school hours. While many of these initiatives focus on supporting families with young children, the model operates on the premise that “it takes a village” to raise a child. Healthy communities lift their students towards brighter futures, and coordinators understand serving everyone, from grandparents and local business owners to young adults, helps children succeed.

Community Schools will offer:

1. Free extracurricular and after-school care for children under 12 who are currently eligible for free or reduced lunch

We will partner with local community centers, childcare providers, and nonprofit organizations to extend extracurricular activities and care to all students currently eligible for free or reduced lunch. These will serve to help our students build meaningful relationships and to keep them engaged in extra hours of instruction.

1. Parental support groups and adult education classes (ex. cooking, financial literacy & language training)

To encourage collective parental engagement surrounding schools, we will offer school- sponsored parental support groups with opportunities for educational classes and workshops. These opportunities will include services ranging from financial literacy, language training, and resume building to cooking, fitness, and parenting. Opportunities to earn a GED will also be streamlined through community school programs.

1. Offer basic healthcare services

We will facilitate partnerships with nonprofits and local health institutions to offer free yearly health and wellness screenings at all public elementary schools. Students will be tested for vision and hearing, BMI, lead exposure, and trauma, then provide the necessary resources for further treatment, if needed. City Hall will impose a 50%

wholesale tax on vaping products, plus an additional $0.10/mL tax on e-liquids containing nicotine, with the proceeds directed to these health screenings as well as youth prevention efforts and treatment for those addicted.

1. Night-time recreational programs for teens and young adults

Community schools offer an opportunity to keep our kids off the streets. Especially in communities most vulnerable to violence, these initiatives are critical to investing in the futures of our youth. In partnership with local faith and nonprofit organizations, we will offer free night-time recreational programs for teens and young adults.

1. Low-cost space for neighborhood events, holidays, and other gatherings

To make these centers successful, community coordinators will work with the area’s pastors, principals, parents, and other community leaders to integrate expanded programming into the 48 public elementary schools in Baltimore City. Especially as funding for parks and recreation in Baltimore continues to decline, the importance of these kinds of integrated initiatives only continues to grow.

Funding directed towards community schools will be allocated on a need basis, so our neighborhoods and schools most in need of support receive immediate assistance. The Deputy Mayor for Education and CEO of Schools will launch a collaborative asset mapping effort to divert resources where they are most critically needed.

1. **Replace School Family Councils with Local School Boards focused on parental and community engagement and student leadership**

Currently, Baltimore City Public Schools requires that each school maintain a School Family

Council (SFC) composed of the principal, assistant principal, teachers, parents and community

members. The SFC's duties include: (1) establishing/maintaining committees such as

Attendance, Climate & Safety, Family and Community Engagement, (2) collaborating with

the principal and Instructional Leadership Team to implement the school performance plan

(SPP), (3) providing feedback to the CEO of Schools on the proposed school budget and

SPP, and (4) assisting the Office of Human Capital with the principal selection process, in the

case of a vacancy. We propose that a more inclusive and community-based model be

implemented through the institution of Local School Boards (LSB) in each elementary, middle,

and high school, which has proven effective in cities such as Chicago.

Local School Boards will consist of the principal, six elected parents, two elected community

representatives, two elected teacher representatives, one elected non-teacher staff

representative, and, in high schools, one elected student representative. The LSB will take a

more active role in the approval of budgets and administrative contracts, not just simply

make recommendations, and evaluate the execution of the SPP, including the effectiveness

of administration and teachers in a report submitted to the CEO of schools and Deputy

Mayor for Education. In high schools, the student representative will have a critical role in

voicing student concerns over the academic climate and student safety within the school, as

well as speaking to community issues affecting youth.

In elementary schools, working within the community school model, LSBs will coordinate with

community stakeholders and philanthropic actors to tailor programs and resources to the

specific needs of each school’s and surrounding neighborhood’s unique needs.

1. **Following the example of Indianapolis, become the second city in America to**

**establish mayoral authority to authorize charter schools, in order to expand public**

**charter school options**

To make these centers successful, community coordinators will work with the area’s pastors, principals, parents, and other community leaders to integrate expanded

Baltimore’s public charter schools time and time again have proven to produce stronger academic results than their traditional school counterparts. In a 2019 study of Maryland’s urban charters, students experiencing poverty gained an additional 30 days of math achievement per year and Black students gained an additional 47 in math achievement per year and 41 days in reading achievement. For students on the cusp of falling behind or who already have felt the effects of inadequate early education and failing schools, these gains cannot be understated.

We will support the expansion of charter schools in Baltimore City by first following the lead of Indianapolis to establish sole mayoral authority for charter school authorization without interference on state levels. This action streamlines the application process and accelerates approval/authorization, ensures transparency in the approval of charter schools, and establishes open lines of communication between the political and financial players as well as neighborhood organizations and community stakeholders. City Hall has tremendous access to capital and philanthropic resources to not only expand Baltimore’s existing network of public charters, but monitor their success and strategically allocate

resources in schools. Indianapolis has seen incredible success in their public charters

following the implementation of mayoral authorization authority. In the 2006-2007 school

year, the Mayor's Office presided over 16 public charter schools. All 16 schools met or

exceeded adequate yearly progress standards, compared to 38% percent of Indianapolis

Public Schools' traditional counterparts.

1. **Increase the flow of charter school funding from cental administrators to charter school operators charter school operators to ensure the funding and independence they require to succeed**

We will commit to directly support charter school operators with the financial means they need, largely circumventing the arduous process of approval from central administrators. This action grants charter school operators with the independence to make rapid and critical decisions about how money will be best spent in their classrooms and in their communities at a much faster pace with an ear to the ground.

1. **Establish schools offering extended-day and year-round instruction**

Studies have shown that students in programs with extended school days perform better academically, and that these gains are even more prominent in previously low-performing schools with economically disadvantaged children. We will establish select schools in underinvested neighborhoods to offer extended day and year-round instruction for interested students and families with the intention to scale.



1. **Renovate our schools’ crumbling infrastructures and install HVAC systems in every school without one**

Too many of Baltimore’s schools have crumbling infrastructures, from leaky roofs and

fractured foundations to insufficient heat and air conditioning systems. Substandard facilities

are not only harmful to our students’ health and safety, they are disrespectful to the children,

the families, community and the culture at-large. These capital improvements cannot be

borne by individual schools and must be part of a comprehensive investment by the city

(and the state) in the future of education in Baltimore. We plan to construct a City fund to finance discretionary maintenance and renovation, allocating more money towards updated

educational materials.

We hear our kids tell us how difficult it is to focus when they are sweating or shivering in

classrooms. Year after year, we see identical headlines lamenting students sent home early

when the weather turns especially hot or especially cold. A Johns Hopkins Study concluded

that school closings due to inadequate facilities have resulted in 1.5 million educational hours

collectively lost. In city schools with the largest achievement gaps, which often have student

populations with disproportionate amounts of students of color and low-income students, this

lost classroom time is even more detrimental. One Harvard study determined that the

difference in exam performance on a 90 degree day compared to a 72 degree day results

is equivalent to a quarter of the Black-White student achievement gap.

1. **Increase teacher recruitment and retention with advancement opportunities**

With hundreds of teachers leaving Baltimore City Public Schools every year, Baltimore faces a serious teacher shortfall that negatively impacts students’ quality of education and teachers’ quality of work.

Johns Hopkins and American University researchers determined that black students who are

exposed to one black teacher by third grade were 13% more likely to enroll in college,

and those who had two black teachers were 32% more likely to enroll in college. To ensure

that more students of color are taught by teachers of color, we will lead teacher recruitment

efforts at the incredible HBCUs that reside in and surround our city to build a diverse, local

staff of educators. Just as we have promised for law enforcement, we will offer automatic

qualification for the dollar homes program to all teachers that pledge to remain in the city

public school system for at least five years.

Educators should be compensated and treated in a manner befitting the crucial role they play in society. In order to combat teacher shortfalls, we need to make the position more competitive, appealing, and growth-orientated. Teachers should receive opportunities for advancement and collaboration throughout their careers. If we elevate the teaching profession, we will expand the pool of talent pursuing teaching as a vocation.

1. **Place an extra adult resource in every classroom at schools with the highest need**

Countless studies have proven the benefits of co-teaching and additional student-teaching resources, especially in high-need classrooms. Another authoritative figure, even if not another teacher, allows the primary teacher to teach without having to interrupt to discipline or regain control, resulting in more instructional time. Two adults in every classroom also presents the opportunity for individualized learning for students who need it, increasing both teacher and student morale and boosting educational outcomes.

Recruitment efforts to hire extra adult resources will be centered around outreach to present and former substitute teachers, parent volunteers, paraeducators, and student teachers from surrounding colleges and universities. We will coordinate with schools of education especially at HBCUs to focus on creating a pipeline to student teaching in city schools, citing the fact that Black students who have one Black teacher are more likely to go to college.

1. **Prioritize restorative justice and redirect school resource officers out of classrooms and into communities**

Disciplinary actions by schools must consider the safety of all students, teachers, and school employees. However, removing students from schools should be the option of last resort. The code of conduct fails to provide alternatives to suspension that address the root cause of the behavior that prompted the suspension. This requires a holistic approach that recognizes the complexities of a student’s behavior and provides alternative outlets and resources. By investing heavily in community schools’ creation and expansion, we can connect some of Baltimore’s most disadvantaged families and children to resources, training, childcare, and other social services. Across all schools, teachers and staff must be trained to implement restorative justice practices, like those that have flourished at, for example, City Springs Elementary. Restorative justice establishes a framework to deal with a crisis before the crisis happens by encouraging students to discuss problems in a safe and constructive manner. This is a superior alternative to disciplinary actions in many cases.

The presence of police in our schools promotes this culture of strict discipline and only reinforces the generally negative relationship between Baltimore’s youth and law enforcement. We pledge to remove school resource officers from campuses and redirect them to neighborhoods with the highest need.

1. **Equip administrators and educators with the resources and training to offer trauma- sensitive support and instruction to students**

Too many students in Baltimore City have been exposed to violence. Public schools need to not only be equipped with adequate instructional resources, but also with trauma sensitivity training. We plan to transform all Baltimore City public schools into trauma-sensitive schools with mental health and counseling resources for students who face violence in their lives and neighborhoods. This requires expanding, embracing, and fully funding trauma-based care and restorative justice practice. To do this, training and professional development surrounding trauma-sensitive disciplinary policies and mental health will be extended to all staff and faculty. Opportunities for families and communities to gain education about coping with trauma will be provided as well. There will also be an increase in staffed counselors and psychiatrists that will assist in many students’ transitions to school. An extra adult in the classroom will serve to help integrate children affected by trauma into the classroom instead of having to isolate them further.

1. **Expand programs for enterprising students to accelerate their education with trade school instruction, university-level coursework, or apprenticeships during their junior and senior year of high school**

Expanding programs geared to all facets of enterprise and academic achievement must be prioritized. More opportunities for vocational school instruction, collegiate coursework, and internships/apprenticeships will be made more readily accessible to students completing their junior and senior years of high school. This effort will be supplemented by harnessing students from the thirteen colleges and universities in and surrounding Baltimore, which over 550 city public school graduates enroll in each year, to serve as educators and mentors.

1. **Offer stipends to local artists and musicians who will devote time to schools whose art and music programs have been suspended**

Officials faced with constricted school budgets often resort to suspending art and music programs, which offer indispensable aspects of cognitive development and are beloved by students. Introduction to the arts is even more important to the city’s many students who have been exposed to trauma. We propose giving stipends to local artists and musicians who choose to pledge their time teaching in schools with suspended art and music programs.

1. **Prioritize student advocacy in the development of IEP plans**

Students with learning disabilities and other educational challenges deserve a say in the creation of their mandated individualized education plans (IEPs). Parents and educators have dominated the conversation without safeguards to ensure that students can work collaboratively with staff to best equip them for graduation and beyond. We will hire designated Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) advocates to stand alongside students as representatives during IEP proceedings. Bilingual advocates and interpreters will also be available for families who request their services.

1. **Launch financial literacy educational programs in all high schools**

Especially given the unprecedented economic strain presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals are facing higher unemployment rates than ever before and families are struggling disproportionately in Black and Brown neighborhoods. In a 2017 study, 32% of Black households in Baltimore City have $0 or less in net-worth, and, while representing approximately 63% of the population, Black residents earn the lowest household income of all races: $33,801. Eliminating the racial income divide requires a quality K-12 education, accessible higher learning opportunities, an inclusive job market, and information on financial literacy.

According to a 2018 FINRA survey, when asked six questions covering fundamental concepts of economics and personal finance, African American participants scored lower than any other race, with an average of 2.3 correct answers out of six.

To level the playing field, Thiru will implement the following initiatives:

* 1. Boost citywide participation in the SIFMA Foundation’s “The Stock Market Game.”

The Stock Market Game helps students build a fundamental understanding of investing while providing them with real world skills practice in math, English Language Arts, economics, social studies, and other subjects. Teachers do not need to be an expert or experienced trader to lead lessons due to the extensive tutorials and supportive resources. The Maryland

Council on Economic Education provides free training throughout the year for first-time users

of the Stock Market Game as well, and sponsors a state-wide awards program in May.

As of the latest estimates, there are 38,102 6th-12th grade students enrolled in Baltimore

City public schools. If every student participated in the year-long game the cost would be

$1,143,060; a 50% participation rate would result in a $571,530 annual expense — this

is minimal in the broad sense of our educational budget. Thiru is committed to making this

resource available to all middle and high school teachers and students.

* 1. Provide free virtual monthly financial seminars

We are committed to improving Baltimore City school’s transition to virtual learning, using free virtual financial literacy seminars to bring us up to speed. By offering these free monthly learning opportunities, the city will not only be able to offer another tool for both students and their parents to increase their understanding of smart money management and investing, but it will also serve as a testing base for virtual learning. City Hall will coordinate with local non-profits to secure funding for learning sessions.



1. **Provide electronic devices conducive to digital learning to households in need.**

In 2018, the National Digital Inclusion Alliance ranked Baltimore the 60th worst-connected city in America in

a study of households without any broadband internet. It found that 21.96% of Baltimore households, or

52,084 families, were without broadband internet access of any kind.

To bridge this divde and ensure equal access to online learning, we will designate funding to pay for the

purchase and distribution of laptops and internet to families. The city should also partner with philanthropic

and community organizations to set up a fund for lightly-used laptops that can be refurbished and distributed

to families in need.

1. **Guarantee high-speed internet access in all neighborhoods.**

The Digital Harbor Foundation recently partnered with the Baltimore Robotics Program to provide free community wifi in southwest Baltimore. City Hall should fund initiatives like theirs and propel them to a broader, citywide scale. Looking to the future, we will partner with broadband internet providers to offer free or significantly reduced-priced essential services to low-income households without access. This action will ensure universal internet access across the city to not only educate our children in this time of virtual learning, but also ensure that adults have the resources to apply for jobs and play their bills in an era of unprecedented economic uncertainty.

**HOW DO WE PAY FOR ALL THESE UPGRADES AND REFORMS?**

*Cannabis taxation and regulation.* In 2018, the State of Colorado generated over $80 million in sales tax

revenue and another $178 million in retail tax revenue from the cannabis industry. Since legalization, the

wholesalers, dispensaries, and their customers have delivered over a billion dollars in additional funding for

needed educational programs, school infrastructure projects, and mental health across the state. Baltimore

and Denver have near identical populations and usage rates, and the medical cannabis industry in Maryland has grown exponentially in recent years. It’s not unreasonable to expect a similar funding boom for Baltimore, should we move forward with recreational legalization. By our most conservative estimates, Baltimore should expect the same $30 million dollars in funding for education programs that Denver receives on a per capita basis each year. If we further apply a modest tax on transactions between wholesalers and dispensaries within the city of Baltimore, we can expect another $3-5 million in revenue each year.

Cannabis has the potential to offset many of the funding deficits facing the city of Baltimore, but we need a Mayor who can work with the Governor and City Council to ensure Baltimore’s kids receive their fair share.

*Public-Private Partnerships.* Spending on education, particularly pre-k-8 schools and programs, has the highest return of any investment in public goods or services. Education spending is about investing now with low-cost capital now to generate future tax revenue and savings in areas like health and criminal justice. We need Mayoral leadership capable of securing outside funding for investments like universal pre-k that can pay for itself. There are $19 in near-term savings per $1 invested in pre-k and up to $38 savings in possible long-term savings and additional tax revenue. Our lack of pre-k and k-8 programming is not an issue of inadequate funding, it is an issue of inadequate leadership.

Using available social financing tools and creative debt financing, Baltimore can rebuild, revitalize, and reimagine its education system with funds from an array of private sources. We need a Mayor with the ability to explain the potential of Baltimore to investors across the world, and one with both the legal and business acumen to ensure the financial position of our city remains healthy and sustainable in the process. In

his first term as Mayor, Thiru will capitalize on our city’s AA credit rating, raising 100 million dollars in private philanthropic capital for education, and exploring unique social financing options with impact investors and banks across the country to invest in the future of Baltimore schools.

*Reprioritization of the Budget.* Point blank, there is wasteful spending in City Hall. We will audit the city’s spending, and where necessary, make the hard reallocation decisions to make sure our kids are our city government’s top priority. We need a Mayor who understands the relationship between education spending, crime reduction, and economic development.

**CONCLUSION**

Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote, “Unless our children begin to learn together, there is little hope that our people will ever learn to live together and understand each other.” We must guarantee the implementation and full funding of the Kirwan Commission recommendations. We must recruit, retain, and value great teachers and principals and librarians; we must incorporate restorative justice practices into the standard curriculum of city schools; and we must erect world- class facilities all across the city where students can succeed. The Education for All Plan is meant to create schools that parents of every background want to send their children and where children of all circumstances can thrive.



A BALTIMORE BLUEPRINT FOR EQUITY, TRANSIT, HEALTHCARE, IMMIGRANTS & THE ENVIRONMENT



*OPEN BOOKS BALTIMORE*

Baltimore mayoral candidate Thiru Vignarajah recently announced "Open Books Baltimore," a commitment to make City Hall more transparent than it has ever been before. As mayor, Vignarajah pledges to:

Launch a citywide forensic audit to be shared with the public within 100 days of taking office

Establish monthly public CitiStat, with three citywide town halls and nine town halls in each police district

Hold a weekly press conference on the state of crime in Baltimore

*"You will know what I know."*

A logo with blue and yellow letters

Description automatically generated

**Root Out Corruption: Thiru’s Plan to Restore Trust in City Hall**

Baltimore has seen a state senator, a city aide, multiple police officers, two police commissioners, and now two

Mayors charged and convicted of public corruption. When former Mayor Catherine Pugh recently pled

guilty, we learned that the latest public corruption prosecution in Baltimore was not the result of an

accounting error or negligent oversight — it was a calculated and deliberate conspiracy driven by the City’s

career politicians seeking money and power rather than striving to serve the public. Enough is enough. This

must end, and it must end now.

Thiru’s plan to root out corruption attacks three intertwined evils: career politicians seeking to get rich and stay in office

rather than serve the public; a culture of nepotism where politicians appoint family and friends—and the

family and friends of their allies; and a pay-to-play system where lobbyists and big money enable the rich

to buy off politicians and buy their way into office.

Baltimore deserves better. Along with releasing his anti-corruption plan, Thiru has committed to a series of pledges and called on all other mayoral candidates to do the same. The people of Baltimore need to be reassured that those who seek to lead them are aware of the lack of faith in City Hall and are prepared to make the commitments needed to restore trust in local government. Highlights of the plan include:

* A charter amendment requiring candidates for city office and any appointee requiring confirmation by the City Council (e.g., the police commissioner) to release 5 years of tax returns. Thiru is still the only mayoral candidate in Baltimore history to release five years of full tax returns.
* A mandate that city elected officials obtain an ethics opinion before accepting any new source of supplemental income over $10,000 and promptly disclose that income to the public.
* A prohibition preventing elected officials from serving as lobbyists for 3 years after their term ends.
* A rule against appointing a family member or employee of an elected official to a vacant elected office.
* A condition that elected officials publicly disclose the existence of a family or business relationship whenever making a personnel recommendation for a position in city government.
* A criminal ban on campaign contributions by registered lobbyists and on any company soliciting donations from its vendors for more than an aggregate amount of $6,000.
* A requirement that any outside loans to a campaign after the final reporting deadline just before a primary or general election be disclosed to the public within 12 hours.
* A 50% tax on personal contributions exceeding $250,000 to one’s own campaign, the proceeds of

which would go to a public fund for opponents with 10,000 signatures or $250,000+ in donations.

Thiru is also committed to transparency once in office in order to keep leadership directly accountable for the state of Baltimore. Once elected, he has pledged to:

* Launch an independent citywide forensic audit of all agencies to be shared with the public within 100 days of taking office.
* Establish monthly public CitiStat for real-time accountability, and hold three citywide town halls per year and a town hall in each of the nine police districts.
* Hold a weekly press conference on the state of crime in Baltimore.

Public office in Baltimore must be earned, not bought. It’s time to root out corruption, to make sure elected officials are accountable the public’s interest above all, and to end nepotism and City Hall’s pay-to-play culture once and for all.

### The Only Baltimore We Have

***Baltimore has an opportunity to reimagine its role in battling the defining challenge of our generation.***

***This will require City leadership, regional cooperation, and global innovation. As Mayor, Thiru will:***

##### Close the Incinerator

Baltimore will shut down the incinerator by permanently ending our contract, working with the County

to pressure Macquarie to replace the incinerator with a mixed-waste materials recovery facility (MRF), and develop a true circular economy around it.

##### Expand the Tree Canopy

Baltimore will expand its tree canopy from 27% to 40% in 10 years, integrating this commitment in city

schools and creating workforce development opportunities for trade schools in landscaping.

##### Clean the Streets & Waterways

Across our city, you will encounter overflowing trash cans, dumped debris, and litter in our streets and

waterways. We will establish twice weekly trash pick ups, double the number of trash cans on the streets, create a clean streets index, hold dumpster weekends, and crack down on illegal dumping.

##### Reimagine Public Transit

We will expand free bus circulator routes along west-east corridors and key arteries to disinvested

communities, with the ultimate goal of a citywide free bus system in 5-10 years. Baltimore will also establish dedicated public transit passages exclusively for buses, pedestrians, scooters, and bikes. This will complement a comprehensive pedestrian-bike plan that would create a 35-mile trail loop.

##### Guarantee Green Development & Water Equity

We will mandate green design (e.g., rain gardens) for all developments and become the first major

city to prohibit water shutoffs for unpaid bills and freeze water bill debt. We will conduct free water testing, provide filtration systems, and rebuild our crumbling water and sewage system.



Baltimore is in desperate need of a government that runs efficiently and provides reliable, quality services. Across our city, you will encounter overflowing trash cans, dumped debris, and litter in our streets and waterways.

We need common sense solutions to clean up our city.

2X Twice weekly trash pick up at community request Double the number of trash cans on the streets

A+ Establish Clean Streets Index, grading cleanliness of every city street Make dumpsters available for community weekend clean ups

Use enhanced technology to crack down on illegal dumping

Ensure Citizen Drop-Off Centers are open seven days a week

Develop Materials Recovery Facility and a circular economy around City waste

***CONNECTING BALTIMORE***

Baltimore should be a defining example of a green and equitable transit system. Current transit deficits correspond to a history of unbalanced economic investments, a backwards approach to sustainability, inequitable distribution of affordable housing, and a failing education system. Together, we will reimagine a transit system for Baltimore with the mobility and needs of all residents in mind.

We will implement Complete Streets to rebuild our crumbling roads and bridges. This will enable safe pedestrian traffic across the city, including East-West avenues serving walkers, bikers, and those riding e-scooters.

In addition to designated bike lanes and green transit avenues, Thiru pledges to complete the Gwynns Falls and Herring Run Trails, which will establish a 35-mile trail loop that connects 80% of Baltimore’s neighborhoods to recreational greenspace.

Not only should a share of e-scooters be distributed to “equity zones” (a quarter are already required to be) — we will also designate parking areas, expand scooter and bike lanes based on scooter usage data, and require companies to automatically reduce prices in neighborhoods with public transit deficits.

A top priority will be to expand free bus circulator routes to include major west-to- east corridors and critical arteries to historically disinvested neighborhoods. This will lay the groundwork for a citywide free public bus system, which will reduce pollution as ridership increases, make the City more accessible, and reduce commute times.

The city that built the first leg of the American railroad should lead the charge to build the first leg of America's first high speed rail between Baltimore and D.C. To guarantee access to commuters of all income levels, the contracted operator will be required to cap the price of commuter passes as a percentage (1-3%) of annual income to ensure this is a transit option for everyone.

To operate in Baltimore City, ride share companies will be required to provide free or reduced fares for riders located in or traveling in transit deserts. Reduced fares will also be applied to trips to critical locations like public transit access points, grocery stores, pharmacies, and schools and community centers.



A logo with blue and yellow letters

Description automatically generated



Baltimore will ban flavored tobacco products including e-cigarettes

As the FDA and CDC have cautioned, flavored vaping and tobacco products, like cigarillos and menthol cigarettes, present a grave health risk, particularly to children. It is no accident the use of e-cigarettes and vapes among young people has exploded, as 7 out of 10 teens are exposed to e-cigarette ads. Major e-cigarette makers are pushing colorful tobacco products, using mobile platforms like YouTube and Twitter, and promoting teen-friendly flavors. Already, 13% of high school students use e-cigarettes—and more than

60 toxins have been identified in liquid flavored products. Baltimore should follow cities from San Francisco to Chicago to Minneapolis, which have prohibited flavored products to protect their citizens and children.

Enact complete prohibition of e-cigarettes in indoor public spaces

The CDC has reported that e-cigarettes not only contain nicotine, but also have lead, nickel, tin, volatile organic compounds, and diacetyl, a chemical linked to a serious lung disease. Secondary aerosol inhalation increases the risks of asthma in young children, sudden infant death syndrome, and respiratory symptoms and infections. Baltimore should build on its partial indoor prohibition, close the loopholes, and forbid smoking of e-cigarettes in all places cigarette smoke is banned, including bars and restaurants.A close up of a white object

Description automatically generated

Initiate city lawsuit against e-cigarette manufacturer JUUL

New York City and DC recently filed major lawsuits against JUUL for illegally targeting youth and intentionally misleading consumers about the consequences of its products. According to the CDC, a single JUUL or e-liquid pod contains the same amount of nicotine as roughly 20 packs of cigarettes. Just as we sued drug companies for fueling the opioid crisis, Baltimore should join the movement of cities suing this industry for creating the latest youth health crisis.

Impose tax on e-cigarettes to fund children’s health screenings at city elementary schools

Like neighboring locales, Baltimore should impose a 50% wholesale tax on vaping products (between Montgomery County’s 30% and DC’s 96%), plus an additional $0.10/mL tax on e-liquids containing nicotine. The tax proceeds would pay for comprehensive health screenings of city elementary school children, as well as youth prevention efforts and treatment for those addicted.

Keep tobacco money out, refuse campaign donations from industry and lobbyists

Our campaign pledges to refuse political donations from tobacco and e-cigarette companies, as well as from their executives and lobbyists. The tobacco industry has made significant contributions to Baltimore leaders in order to block regulations that would protect our children from their harmful products. Citizens deserve to know that their health and safety comes first, not campaign finances and industry profits.

***“I want Baltimore to become the most inviting and hospitable city in the country for the LGBTQ+ community. No one should be judged for who they are or who they love. As a city, our policies, practices, and institutions must reflect that commitment.”***

#### Thiru's policy framework for fighting discrimination and protecting the civil rights of LGBTQ+ citizens in Baltimore:

1. Promote LGBTQ+ owned small businesses, entrepreneurs, and city districts
2. Enable services to account for challenges facing LGBTQ+ youth in Baltimore
3. Prioritize inclusive workplace policies and trainings for all city employees
4. Appoint an official LGBTQ+ Liaison within the Mayor’s Executive Office
5. Address the needs of at-risk LGBTQ+ populations including veterans and seniors
6. Protect transgender citizens from crime and discriminatory police enforcement
7. Improve and expand health services for members of the LGBTQ+ community Broaden LGBTQ+ Commission’s responsibilities to include training and privacy- sensitive data collection for evidence-based policy making

Thiru, an advocate and ally, led the drafting of a report by the Maryland Attorney General, *The State of Marriage Equality in America*, which was cited by the Supreme Court in its landmark decision, *Obergefell v. Hodges.*

A logo with blue and yellow letters

Description automatically generated

**Vignarajah Declares Solidarity, Announces Plans to Make Baltimore Most Inviting City in America for LGBTQ Community**

Our city has a vibrant and proud LGBTQ community. Thiru is dedicated to safeguarding their rights and fostering diversity and inclusivity within Baltimore. While Baltimore has made progress, members of the LGBTQ community continue to face systemic discrimination with regard to healthcare, housing, education, and employment, as well as in their day-to-day lives in the forms of stigmatization and outright violence. Thiru stands as a proud ally to the LGBTQ community and will work with local leaders to promote policies that account for the reality that discrimination manifests itself differently depending upon race, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Thiru’s policy framework will focus on a range of issues important to Baltimore’s LGBTQ community

and aim to break remaining barriers to full equality, including:

1. Promote LGBTQ-owned small businesses, entrepreneurs, and city districts
2. Enable services to account for challenges facing LGBTQ youth in Baltimore
3. Prioritize inclusive workplace policies and trainings for all city employees
4. Appoint an official LGBTQ Liaison within the Mayor’s Executive Office
5. Address the needs of at-risk LGBTQ populations including veterans and seniors
6. Protect transgender citizens from crime and discriminatory enforcement
7. Improve and expand health services for members of the LGBTQ community
8. Broaden LGBTQ Commission’s responsibilities to include training and privacy-sensitive data collection for evidence-based policy making
9. **Promote LGBTQ-owned small businesses, entrepreneurs, and city districts**

Baltimore must invite small businesses and create business alliances across the board. That said, it can take steps to specifically assist and accommodate local LGBTQ-owned businesses as well. Thiru will incorporate LGBTQ-owned businesses into the incentive programs that function through the Office of Minority and Women-Owned Business Development, in order to rightfully acknowledge their role in providing services to the citizens of Baltimore and in creating a more inclusive, diverse space for community. Building on residential and commercial districts that serve and celebrate LGBTQ culture, Thiru will also prioritize city and private investment in welcoming, inclusive neighborhoods.

1. **Enable services to account for challenges facing LGBTQ youth in Baltimore**

*Protecting LGBTQ Identities in Schools*

In April of 2019, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners passed [Policy JBB](https://www.osibaltimore.org/2019/04/baltimore-city-school-board-passes-policy-to-protect-trans-students/), which ensures that transgender students have access to the restrooms of their preference and are referred to by the right gender/pronouns in class and on official documents and records. To make Baltimore’s public schools even more inclusive, Thiru will establish LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and support LGBTQ youth anti-harassment campaigns.

*Catering Homeless Shelters to LGBTQ Youth*

According to a recent study, roughly [40%](https://nationalhomeless.org/issues/lgbt/) of the homeless youth population in the United States identify as LGBTQ. Thiru will employ the Mayor’s Office of Human Services to equip Baltimore’s pre-existing homeless shelters, along with transitional and supportive housing, with the resources to best serve LGBTQ youth, such as increased counseling staff, tailored job training, and access to health services.

*Founding a LGBTQ drop-in center*

The Department of Health and Human Services shows that LGBTQ individuals are far more likely to experience clinical depression and are roughly three times more likely to complete suicide. For these reasons, [New York City has just pledged 4.8 million dollars to opening a new 24 hour drop in center](https://www.aliforneycenter.org/programs/drop-in/) [for LGBTQ youth.](https://www.aliforneycenter.org/programs/drop-in/) Baltimore should follow the example of other cities and create its own drop-in center. The center would unite resources and actors, like schools and community organizations, around our LGBTQ youth.

1. **Prioritize inclusive workplace policies and trainings for all city employees**

Discrimination in the workplace is an unfortunate reality for many in the LGBTQ community. Baltimore City Agencies must take proactive steps to combat prejudice against their employees. In an effort to increase accountability and establish a welcoming, respectful environment for LGBTQ employees, Thiru will implement mandatory and recurring inclusivity training for city employees, beginning with new hires. The city’s existing LGBTQ Commission will head training efforts. In addition, Thiru will require there to be at least one gender-neutral bathroom in all city-owned buildings and adjust city government forms to include gender neutral language and non-binary identities.

1. **Appoint an official LGBTQ Liaison within the Mayor’s Executive Office:**

To increase the awareness of LGBTQ issues within the mayor’s executive office, Thiru will establish an official LGBTQ Liaison. The LGBTQ Liaison will convene with community members, local organizations, and relevant city entities to learn about the issues that Baltimore’s LGBTQ people face every day. The liaison will review city policies and services, communicate to government leaders when proposals fail to meet standards for LGBTQ equality, and serve as a resource for constituents who want to bring LGBTQ-related issues to city government but hesitate in fear of dismissal or misunderstanding. The appointed individuals would collaborate alongside the city’s existing LGBTQ Commission, its selected Chairperson, as well as the Liaison Officer within the Baltimore City Police Department.

1. **Address the needs of at-risk LGBTQ populations including veterans and seniors**

[Veterans who identify as LGBTQ face increased health risks and unique challenges in health care.](https://www.baltimoresun.com/health/bs-hs-elderly-lgbt-20150927-story.html) Thiru will lead Baltimore in conjunction with the Veterans’ Commission to collect data on LGBTQ veterans and provide them with the appropriate health benefits and services. He will also employ legal experts to aid veterans who were wrongfully subject to discrimination during service or the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” policy upon discharge.

Thiru will also strive to aid Baltimore’s senior LGBTQ population, who are more prone to health issues and suffer from rising housing costs. He will prompt the LGBTQ Commission and LGBTQ Liaison in the Executive Office to advocate on behalf of the senior LGBTQ population, push for affordable housing options, and inform senior-care facility managers, employees, and residents of relevant anti-discrimination laws.

1. **Protect transgender citizens from crime and discriminatory enforcement**

The nationwide surge in violent hate crimes against the transgender community is both heartbreaking and unacceptable[.](https://www.hrc.org/blog/hrc-mourns-tydi-a-black-transgender-woman-killed-in-baltimore) [Baltimore has seen multiple incidents of transphobic related violence.](https://www.hrc.org/blog/hrc-mourns-tydi-a-black-transgender-woman-killed-in-baltimore) Thiru will work with the LGBTQ Commission Chairperson, the LGBTQ Liaison to the Executive Office, and LGBTQ Liaison Officer to bolster relationships between law enforcement and the transgender community. Further measures include 1) requiring the LGBTQ Officer to submit statistics and reports on LBGTQ-related crimes to the Mayor’s Office, 2) monitoring the Police Department’s fulfillment of and training related to [Policy 720](https://www.baltimorepolice.org/sites/default/files/Policies/720_Lesbian_Gay_Bisexual_And_Transgender_Involved_Incidents_0.pdf) [(2018 draft here](https://www.powerdms.com/public/BALTIMOREMD/documents/349766)) and 3) incorporating recruitment of LGBTQ individuals into Baltimore’s police force within crime policy proposals and halting discriminatory practices such as unnecessary trespass and loitering arrests.

1. **Improve and expand health services for members of the LGBTQ community**

*Mental Health*

[LGBTQ individuals, especially youth, are more than twice as likely to suffer from a mental health](https://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Psychiatrists/Cultural-Competency/Mental-Health-Disparities/Mental-Health-Facts-for-LGBTQ.pdf) [condition compared to non-LGBTQ identifying individuals.](https://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Psychiatrists/Cultural-Competency/Mental-Health-Disparities/Mental-Health-Facts-for-LGBTQ.pdf) Thiru will provide more accessible and affordable mental health services tailored to the LGBTQ community under a new mental health program within the Baltimore City Health Department. This initiative will create a new LGBTQ- specific mental health hotline and foster partnerships with school counselors and youth centers/organizations to provide mental health resources where currently insufficient.

*Appropriate/Inclusive Treatment and Care*

Often a doctor’s office can be an uncomfortable and vulnerable space for LGBTQ individuals. Thiru will encourage efforts to provide inclusive medical care to members of the LGBTQ community, following models similar to Johns Hopkins’ “Embracing the Rainbow” program. These initiatives will encourage respectful communication between LGBTQ patients and medical professionals, and emphasize training focused on gender-neutral questioning and non-binary options to medical inquiries.

*Partnerships with Health Professionals*

Institutions such as the Baltimore City Health Department and the Mayor’s Office of Human Services will partner with local healthcare providers, state and federal agencies, and community groups to promote LGBTQ health and foster efficient collaboration. Health issues such as HIV prevention and treatment will receive particular attention.

1. **Broaden LGBTQ Commission’s responsibilities to include training and privacy-sensitive data collection for evidence-based policy making**

In early 2018, Baltimore City passed an executive order to create a city-sponsored LGBTQ Commission, which comprises 15 community members who offer insights and recommendations to promote the prosperity of LGBTQ Baltimoreans. This executive order was a vital decision to further equality-driven policymaking, but there is more we can do to integrate and support the Commission. Thiru would expand its responsibilities, while ensuring access to required resources. The Commission would lead research on issues pertaining to the community and manage inclusivity and diversity training for city employees and external parties.

Too often we fail to collect LGBTQ specific data to inform the allocation of resources, rendering the massive disparities experienced by members of the LGBTQ community — particularly transgender people — invisible to policymakers. With the Commission’s help, Baltimore can study, investigate, and close the gaps in health, income, and well-being outcomes that the LGBTQ community experiences, collecting data that respects individual and community privacy. Involvement through government or third-party training, in schools or medical facilities, will heighten the Commission's visibility and fulfill an essential arm of community outreach.



*Aspiring to become the most inviting and hospitable city in the country for immigrants and refugees, Baltimore should be the Plymouth Rock and Ellis Island of the next century."*



*Thiru's Plan to Safeguard & Support Immigrants*



Guarantee Legal Proceedings & Right to Counsel

Amend the city charter to guarantee legal proceedings and a right to counsel, with a translator if neccessary, for those who face deportation

No Support for ICE

Promise no money or effort will be directed towards supporting ICE

Bar ICE from sensitive locations like places of worship, hospitals, and courthouses Encourage victims and witnesses to cooperate in human trafficking, violent crime, and domestic violence cases

Prioritize Civil Resolution & Recruit Immigrant Officers

Work with state government to direct police to pursue civil remedies/diversion options prior to arrest for non-violent offenses where deportation is a disproportionate response Recruit more immigrant police officers and remove bar on permanent residence

Invite Cultural Exchange

Hold events to celebrate Baltimore's immigrant populations Offer more affordable language classes for community members

Establish H-1B Visa Matching Program

Pair immigrant workers with local employers, non-profits, and municipal agencies

Heighten Representation & Outreach

Appoint liaisons/translators to speak to City Hall on behalf of community advisory boards

Improve coordination within the Mayor's office to offer consistent, quality, and easily- accessible resources to programs and information

Expand Municipal ID Program for Non-Citizen Residents

Broaden access to city-run assistance by providing valid ID to non-citizen residents Secure non-resident participation in decisions regarding the local school board



*Aspirando a ser la ciudad mas atractiva y hospitalaria en el país para los inmigrantes y refugiados, Baltimore debería ser el Plymouth Rock y Ellis Island del próximo siglo.*



*El Plan de Thiru para Asegurar y Auydar a los Inmigrantes*



Garantizar Procedimientos legales y el derecho al consejo

Enmendar la Carta de la Ciudad para garantizar procedimientos legales y el derecho al consejo, con derecho a servicios de traducción, para aquellos en peligro de deportación.

No apoyo para ICE

Ni fondos ni esfuerzos serán proporcionados al ICE.

No permitir que ICE entre en locales sensitivos como iglesias, hospitales, y cortes.

Apoyar las victimas y los testigos a cooperar en casos de la trata de personas, de crimen violenta y de la violencia doméstica.

Dar prioridad al remedio civil & recultar policías inmigrantes

Trabajar con el gobierbo estatal para hacer que la policía recurra al remedio civil y desvío previo al arresto para las ofensas no violenta donde la deportación es una respuesta desproporcionada.

Contratar con mas inmigrantes para ser policía y quitar el requisito de residencia permanente

Invitar intercambio cultural

Tener eventos para celebrar la población inmigrante de Baltimore.

Dar mas clases de lenguaje económico para miembros de la comunidad.

Establecer un programa coincidente de H-1B Visa

Acoplar trabajadores inmigrantes con empleadores locales, las organizaciones sin fines de lucro, y agencias municipales.

Crecer la representación y programas de divulgación

Nombrar contactos y traductores para hablar con la alcaldía en los consejos consultivos de la comunidad

Mejorar la coordinación con la oficina del alcalde para dar recursos constantes, de calidad, y fácilmente accesible para programas y información

Ampliar el programa de identificación municipal para residentes no ciudadana

Ampliar el acceso a la ayuda de la ciudad dando identificación válida a los residentes no ciudadanos

Asegurar la participación de la gente no residente en las decisiones que afectan a las escuelas locale

*SQUEEGEEING ALTERNATIVE PLAN*

Squeegeeing emerges from the complex problems that have plagued Baltimore for generations: a lack of economic opportunity, unaccountability in our broken public schools, a sweeping opioid epidemic, and rampant crime that disproportionately affects Black and Brown communities. Getting individuals off the streets and into well-paying, stable jobs, as well as connecting them to the resources they need, will require a multifaceted, comprehensive approach.

Squeegee boys are not one monolithic group. These individuals have unique motivations and needs that prompt their decision to turn to squeegeeing. We see three distinct categories of individuals and realize each will require a personalized engagement strategy:

Those who squeegee to provide for themselves and their families

Victims of addiction, mental illness, or have backgrounds impacted by substance abuse

Those who are committed to squeegeeing regardless of diversion attempts



Open pathways for advancement in education or employment Provide health, addiction, housing, or job placement services Take the tools of their trade to raise the cost of doing business

A logo with blue and yellow letters

Description automatically generated

**FROM SQUEEGEES TO SAFETY AND SUCCESS**

Squeegee boys have become, fair or not, a symbol of Baltimore’s current plight. To some, they are an unfortunate marker of a city led by complicit politicians and failing schools that do not provide people, youth especially, with meaningful job opportunities and career advancement pathways. For others, they represent a menacing presence that deters them from bringing their families downtown. At a different time in Baltimore’s history, these squeegee workers would not pose such a challenge to residents and elected officials. However, with record violence, they are an ever-present reminder that Baltimore’s leaders are failing to connect the dots and support the individuals who may need it most.

We know that interactions between drivers and squeegee boys can turn aggressive. In January 2020, we saw the heart-wrenching video of a man senselessly beaten by squeegee boys on the corner of President and Lombard. Not only do commuters feel threatened, but squeegee boys also put themselves into danger darting in between busy traffic. In October of 2018, a ten-year-old squeegee boy was injured after being struck by a car; in 1986, a fourteen-year-old squeegee boy was fatally hit by a vehicle. City Hall has yet to move the needle in a way that instills confidence that we can avoid another tragedy — we don’t need another incident to learn from our past.

Squeegeeing emerges from the complex problems that have plagued Baltimore for generations: a lack of economic opportunity, unaccountability in our broken schools, a sweeping opioid epidemic, and rampant crime that disproportionately affects black and brown communities. Getting individuals off the streets and into well- paying jobs, as well as connecting them to the resources they need, will require a comprehensive approach.

**Identify What Drives Individuals to Squeegeeing**

Squeegee boys are not one monolithic group. These individuals have unique motivations and needs that prompt their decision to turn to squeegeeing. Thiru and his team see three distinct categories of individuals and realize each will require a personalized engagement strategy:

1. Those who squeegee to provide for themselves and their families
2. Those who squeegee and are themselves struggling with addiction or mental illness or come from backgrounds impacted by substance abuse
3. Those who will attempt to continue squeegeeing regardless of diversion attempts

Baltimore’s existing programming and services are disjointed and do not sufficiently provide the wraparound care that will lead to sustainable outcomes. To best engage with squeegee workers, we need to personally meet them where they are. Squeegeeing is limited to the few corners with the highest traffic volume. Our team went to the street corners, collected anecdotal evidence, and spoke with these young people, realizing that squeegeeing primarily occurs on fourteen corners:

**Map of Top Squeegee Locations as identified by the Thiru for Baltimore Team**

A map of a city

Description automatically generated

As mayor, Vignarajah pledges to:

1. Ensure squeegee boys are aptly connected to pathways to advance their education or gain secure employment with advancement opportunities
2. Recognize squeegee boys with addiction, mental illness and/or homelessness limitations that require health, addiction, housing, or job placement services and promptly facilitate access to those programs
3. In unique cases, where individuals will continue to turn to squeegeeing regardless of alternative options, take the tools of their trade to raise the cost of doing business

**Create Alternative Work Programs that Compete with the Benefits of Squeegeeing**

*Facilitate Job Interviews Between Squeegee Boys and Local Businesses*

City leaders cannot pretend that creating a stable nine-to-five job that pays $15 an hour, before taxes, can ever compete with the perks of being a squeegee boy. We must acknowledge that they can in some instances make

$30 to $50 an hour, can come and go as they please, and report to no one but themselves. Nevertheless, we must present an alternative employment opportunity that is attractive to these young people.

Thiru has already started partnering with local businesses to provide squeegee boys with secure employment and in turn, advancement opportunities. Thiru will hire liaisons to assist squeegee boys interested in pursuing a stable, permanent career and connect them with local businesses that are willing to offer employment. While meaningful employment may present new challenges to these individuals, it can teach valuable skills, such as how to build a schedule, how to remain accountable to a team, how to build a relationship with a supervisor, and how to follow codes of conduct. The greatest opportunity provided by employment in local businesses is upward mobility. These opportunities will open an avenue for progression otherwise difficult to obtain for many of these young men, and certainly not available on a street corner.

We have refused to wait for city politicians to take action, or even for the election, to implement a program that can provide immense benefits for our economy and these young men. Squeegee boys and local businesses interested in participating should email [opportunity@thiru2020.com.](mailto:opportunity@thiru2020.com)

**Station Unarmed, Site-Specific, Deputized Community Liaisons at the Busiest Corners**

*Bring Resources to Street Corners*

Deputized community liaisons will positively interact with squeegee boys in their designated zone, building relationships and trust. Liaisons will not take away resources from our struggling police force -- instead, these liaisons will receive specific training on de-escalation techniques, and curate a specific policy for positive and appropriate engagement with squeegee boys.

Part of this positive engagement will include identifying school-aged individuals, in partnership with the relevant schools and after-school employment or programming, where applicable, who should be required to return to their education. Each deputized liaison will receive access to point contact information for all middle and high schools in Baltimore City. The City can encourage and support heightened collaboration between the liaisons and educators/administrators to redirect these young squeegee boys back to the classroom, while making sure their needs are met and they have the guidance, resources, and support to thrive.

These deputized community liaisons would also be trained on identifying vulnerable individuals in need of social services and City programs. They will receive training on recognizing who is suffering from food insecurity, addiction and mental illness, or housing troubles, so as to connect those individuals to appropriate experts and resources. This will take the form of Seattle’s Law Enforcement Diversion Programs (LEAD) which provides a credible alternative to booking individuals with behavioral health needs for low-level offenses. Instead of creating criminal entanglements, LEAD diverts these individuals to community-based interventions including housing, addiction, mental illness and health services.

*Raise the Cost of Doing Business*

Baltimore’s squeegee boys are making calculations on how to make ends meet. Some will not be receptive to alternative job opportunities because of the lucrative cash flow squeegeeing provides. That being said, we need to change the calculation by not only introducing consistent and favorable options for skill development and upward mobility, but also by increasing the cost of doing business in the streets by confiscating the tools of their trade. In accordance with the Baltimore City Code and working in conjunction with Community Liaisons; site-specific, unarmed private security guards who have been temporarily granted limited policing power will have the ability to confiscate squeegees. They will have no authority beyond their stationed corners, but this narrow power will raise squeegee boys’ opportunity costs. Article 19, Section 47-4 of the code grants police the authority to restrict solicitation “from any operator or occupant of a motor vehicle that is in traffic on a public street, whether in exchange for cleaning the vehicle’s windows or otherwise.”



The marijuana marketplace in Baltimore is currently a chaotic free-for-all. The illegal trade contributes to record violence, and the medical trade is not taxed. Mayoral Candidate Thiru Vignarajah has pledged to make Baltimore the first city in America to regulate and tax marijuana without waiting for federal or state approval.A grey leaf on a black background

Description automatically generated

# Devote Tax Revenue to Public Education Priorities

All City revenue would be directed exclusively to key education programs:  Universal pre-K for every 3- and 4-year-old child

 Debt-free higher education for public high school graduates, including trade school  Funding to grow the endowments of HBCUs

# Establish City Agency to Manage the New Market

Appoint board members who will develop permit criteria; fix taxes and regulations; and issue growth, processing, sale, and “cannabis café” permits

Create a safety board that will ensure recreational cannabis is safe and free of dangerous additives

# Guarantee Access and Equity for Communities of Color

Frustration continues to grow as communities of color—who disproportionately

A logo with blue and yellow letters

Description automatically generated

**Reduce Crime, Create Jobs & Increase Investments in Education**

**by Regulating and Taxing Baltimore’s Marijuana Market**

*Mayoral candidate Thiru Vignarajah announced a bold plan to issue permits and tax the cannabis trade in Baltimore to reduce crime, create well-paying jobs, reduce overdoses, and fund universal pre-K for every Baltimore child.*

The marijuana marketplace in Baltimore is currently a chaotic free-for-all. The illegal trade contributes to record violence while depriving taxpayers of hundreds of millions of dollars. The illegal street market operates unimpeded as police and prosecutors publicly squabble about whether to enforce current laws, even as street marijuana is increasingly laced with fentanyl and K-2. Medical cannabis is booming but cannot be taxed and has virtually no licensed distributors of color.

Bottom line: a billion dollars is spent on cannabis products each year, which largely ends up in the monopoly hands of untaxed licenses and violent gangs and drug organizations.

This is the worst of all worlds. Violence is unabated; avoidable overdoses persist; and drug proceeds remain locked in a violent black market. Moving the cannabis trade into a well-regulated, transparent market and out of the shadows will (1) reduce gun violence driven by competing gangs, (2) decrease overdose deaths from laced marijuana, (3) reduce opioid addiction and overdoses; (4) mitigate the racial wealth gap, and (5) provide vital revenue to fund universal pre-K, finance repairs and upgrades at K-12 school facilities, guarantee free college in Maryland for public school graduates, and grow HBCU endowments. Baltimore City cannot afford to wait for indecisive lawmakers in Annapolis to take action while the City suffers from the failed war on drugs.

Just as Colorado and other states have issued permits and taxed the sale of cannabis, even though it remains illegal under federal law, so too should Baltimore City issue sales permits and tax cannabis. The same people who think Baltimore City has to wait for Maryland law to change thought Colorado had to wait for federal law to change. It’s time for Baltimore to lead, not follow.

**Issue Permits to Baltimore Businesses to Aid Communities of Color**

When it comes to marijuana, the war on drugs has been a colossal failure. For decades, communities of color have disproportionately shouldered the costs of Baltimore’s enforcement policies. The communities who were most devastated by the failed policies of the 1980s ought to be the first to benefit from this emerging market.

* Permits will be preferentially issued to enterprises owned, operated, and controlled by historically disadvantaged business owners of color.
* Permits will be issued to distributors owned, operated, and controlled by local businesses.
* Permits will be preferentially issued to enterprises who commit to hire employees with non- violent criminal records who are seeking legitimate employment opportunities.

**Require Tax Proceeds be Spent Strictly on Public Education Programs**

The emerging cannabis market would produce $250 million in annual revenue for Baltimore City. Maryland and neighboring states will inevitably legalize marijuana, but there is a first-mover advantage in this industry that the City should seize. In the past, residents have been promised funds for education from controversial ventures like casinos only to see money diluted or redirected to other priorities. This won’t happen again.

* All cannabis tax proceeds will be strictly dedicated to key education programs, starting with

(1) universal pre-K for every 3- and 4-year-old child, (2) repairs and improvements at K-12 facilities, (3) debt-free 4-year college, community college, or trade school for Baltimore public high school graduates, and (4) funding to grow the endowments of HBCUs.

* These funds will be used only to support new programs and to supplement, not replace, current funding sources for the expansion of existing programs.

**Establish Infrastructure to Manage Complex Emerging Market**

* The City will establish a commission composed of community members, with no conflicts, who will manage and make permitting decisions. The process and decision-making will be fully public and transparent so there are no doubts who made the decision and why.
* The City will create a city-operated credit union that holds the proceeds of cannabis sales, collects taxes and distributes them immediately to vital education programs, and eventually makes its reserve funds available for low-interest student and small business loans.
* The City will create a safety board that will ensure that recreational cannabis is safe and free of dangerous additives like fentanyl and will create and communicate clear regulations about when, where, and how the product can be sold and used.

In theory, in states like Colorado, prosecutors could bring charges under federal drug laws anytime. In practice, they never have. The premise of the proposed approach is that prosecutors in Baltimore have better things to do with their time than to go after permitted, minority-owned cannabis dispensaries based in Baltimore who hire residents desperately trying to obtain legitimate employment to turn their lives around. Issuing city permits and collecting taxes would no more make the sales legal under state law than issuing state licenses makes the sales legal under federal law. But, with ingenuity and leadership, we can still bring the marijuana trade out of the dangerous shadows—where gangs kill over turf—and create a safer market that redresses racial inequities and generates massive tax revenue at a time when Baltimore desperately needs it.





If Baltimore is to become the city it’s destined to be, the backbone of its economy must be small businesses. Here are Thiru's key priorities and concrete ideas to foster a welcoming, sustainable environment where businesses can thrive today and tomorrow...

#### Guarantee Public Safety

Create a safe and secure atmosphere around businesses by ensuring sufficient public and private policing

Reduce crime around businesses by providing incentives to purchase, install, and register cloud-based security cameras

#### Reduce the Costs of Doing Business in Baltimore

Cut property taxes in half over a period of ten years End minor privilege and permitting fees

Expand free parking near shops and restaurants Introduce low-interest rainy day loans for small businesses

#### Encourage Entrepreneurship, Diversity & Innovation

Pledge health insurance coverage for up to seven employees for companies that stay in Baltimore for at least five years

Recruit small businesses with a national marketing campaign

Provide tax incentives to encourage growth of small businesses owned and operated by minorities, women, members of LGBTQ and immigrant communities



From The Wire to Veep, from the Star Spangled Banner to jazz, Baltimore’s rich history in art, film, and music is a source of pride and engine for growth.

Baltimore has all the promise to once more be a leader in the arts. But building an economy around art, film, and music will not happen on its own. City Hall must play a central role to ignite this industry.

THIRU'S PLAN TO REVITALIZE THE ARTS IN BALTIMORE

Expand and support the creation of additional arts and entertainment districts in addition to Station North, Highlandtown, and Bromo Tower

Extend tax-free income benefits in art districts to cover more artists, including, for example, musicians, spoken-word performers, and filmmakers

Create an "artists in residence" program. Participating artists and musicians would receive healthcare and a stipend in exchange for committing to teach their art in public schools and promote art in Baltimore's communities

Lead a capital campaign to raise funds from private donors in order to reinforce the shaky financial foundation of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

Re-establish incentives to encourage television producers and filmmakers to set their works in the city

Launch a mural initiative that matches local artists, potential donors, and community hosts to collaboratively beautify Baltimore