



Open Letter to the Leadership of Baltimore

Baltimore is in crisis. Over the past three years, more than 1,000 people have been murdered, tens of thousands have been shot, and the situation in our city is only getting worse. The economic impact of this violent crime costs our city \$3.6 billion annually – nearly \$6,300 a year for each city resident. In no uncertain terms, crime is devastating our community.

We, the people of Baltimore, need to do something about this. We want our city back. We want to be able to work and raise our families in areas where we feel safe and, unfortunately, right now that is simply not possible.

Rather than just complain about the problem, we propose a solution. Bring back the Community Support Program. This program was tested by the Baltimore Police Department two years ago and was found to be very effective in helping to solve crime. During its brief test period, the Program provided useful information on five murders and 18 shootings in the city. Through the use of aerial surveillance technology, the program makes the ground-based CitiWatch cameras that many are now requesting significantly more effective, extending their coverage to large parts of the city while providing valuable information as to what happened at crime scenes and where suspects came from and went to after crimes occur.

Despite its success, the Community Support Program was discontinued when the ACLU and others raised questions about how the information it provided could be misused to invade people's privacy. While protections and oversight are in place to limit any potential risk of abuse, we ultimately feel that the situation in the city is so dire that the significant benefits of solving unsolvable crimes and deterring crime far outweigh any risks. The program's 20-30% goal in the reduction in major crime represents 70-105 people not being murdered and hundreds not being shot – all of which simply outweigh the fear of possible misuse. If the ACLU or others feel this is still unacceptable, we would challenge them to come live in our community for a while then see if they feel the same way.

Beyond the obvious benefits the Community Support Program brings in solving crime, we believe widespread knowledge of the program also helps in deterring crime. Today, the historically low solve rate for murders and shootings in Baltimore offers little in the way of deterrence to those who do not think they will get caught. After observing what the Community Support Program is able to provide as information to investigators, any thinking person would be reluctant to commit a major crime in Baltimore. We would recommend briefing all high school and at risk youth in the city.

Similarly, the Community Support Program can help the community and the police to build trust with each other. Beyond allowing crimes to be solved without relying on witnesses coming forward, the program enables the community to turn the cameras around to observe police actions. This allows for better oversight and review of police conduct. It also enables defense attorneys and public defenders to verify officer statements as to actions on the ground at the time of an incident.

Beyond these benefits, it is important to point out that the Community Support Program would only be used to help solve major crimes, support defense attorneys and public defenders, and investigate police actions. The Program is limited in resolution to prevent any detection of race, sex, dress, or other personnel characteristics. All locations reviewed by program analysts are also available for oversight and review by anyone in the community.

It is now up to us, the citizens of Baltimore. We have talked with many people, met with a range of community groups, spoken with many pastors, talked to the city chamber of commerce, met with city council members and – with very few exceptions – the reaction to the Community Service Program has been positive. The biggest question is why we are not already doing this.

Bottom line: We need to do something. We are rapidly losing people, jobs, and our children's future. Adding the Community Support Program to the plans proposed by the Governor and Mayor can have a significant impact, not only on solving crime, but also on deterring crime and losing another generation to the streets. The time to act is now.

Archie Williams, Joyous Jones

Community with Solutions



Endorsing Groups

Pastor Simmons

Simmons Memorial Baptist Church

Baltimore City Chamber of Commerce

Mothers of Murdered Sons (MOMS)

Victory Swift

Our Victorious City