



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*100 Holliday Street, Room 250
Baltimore, Maryland 21202*

December 3, 2025

Honorable Ivan J. Bates, Esq.
State's Attorney for Baltimore City
120 E. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear State's Attorney Bates,

Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention, though I am concerned by the abruptness of this decision and the manner in which it was communicated. In this letter, I will seek to assuage some of your concerns, but my response is simple: I am asking you to reconsider your inexplicable decision to terminate direct coordination and communication with the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE).

Together, in coordination with the entire public safety apparatus present in Baltimore, we have been able to achieve historic reductions in homicides and nonfatal shootings across our city, with homicides down 29.8% and non-fatal shootings down 25.2% as of December 1, 2025. As you know, this reduction is on top of the equally historic progress we saw in 2023 and 2024, and is an extension of the trend that began in September 2022. This progress is the direct result of partnership and collaboration between those working to prevent and intervene in violence, law enforcement, prosecutors, and community partners.

Each of us has a role to play, and we must continue to work together to sustain the reductions we are seeing as a city. Any break from that partnership, communication, and collaboration threatens to undermine the momentum we have worked so hard to achieve.

I will take this opportunity to reiterate that the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, established in the first weeks of my tenure in [December 2020](#), is my mayoral administration's lead agency in the public safety space. They were specifically tasked at the point of their creation with "coordinating city agencies and community partners in the fight against violence in Baltimore" and "ensuring accountability across Baltimore's holistic violence reduction strategy." Therefore, it is simply not practical to cease interaction with MONSE while maintaining close coordination with my team, law enforcement, and community partners. It is all part of the same whole.

That being said, I will reiterate what I frequently communicate publicly: no agency is perfect, and we welcome good-faith engagement on how to improve our operations. In order for that to happen, we all need to be at the table. I do not want you to feel that your concerns are not being heard. Our office, both my personal office and MONSE leadership, have attempted to facilitate direct meetings with you and representatives of your office. It is concerning, and not entirely accurate, to claim as you do in your letter that you have been met with unwillingness from me or my agency leadership to meet with you when appropriate. Declaring an intent to break partnership and communication, as you've now directed your office to do, does nothing but impede our ability to continue our work together.

In the spirit of partnership and transparency, I want to directly address your concerns in this format, as you have displayed a preference for written communication.

GVRs

The effectiveness of Baltimore's Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRs) hinges on close coordination between the Mayor's Office, BPD, and the State's Attorney's Office, State partners, community members, and service providers to intervene in and disrupt group violence. It is a crucial component of the City's strategy to reduce homicides and promote justice that focuses on the small number of group-involved individuals who are responsible for driving the majority of violence in Baltimore. As the most formally evaluated intervention strategy, GVRs has been directly tied to significant reductions in shootings and homicides, including here in Baltimore. Researchers tied the first 18 months of GVRs implementation in the Western District to a 25% cumulative reduction in homicides and nonfatal shootings, together with a 33% reduction in carjackings, with no commensurate increase in arrests.

Preserving your office's direct involvement in the strategy is crucial as we look to expand GVRs beyond the current five BPD Districts. Prosecution data, including recidivism and case dispositions, are key performance indicators that are needed to assess how the strategy is working and where we may—collaboratively—need to make adjustments to sustain this work. Additionally, GVRs includes embedding prosecutors in ongoing group investigations to build the strongest possible cases. We cannot afford to jeopardize this work.

MONSE's participation in GVRs, alongside partners in BPD, other law enforcement agencies, and the Maryland Attorney General's Office will continue uninterrupted. It is our sincere desire that despite this latest letter, your office will continue to take their place at the table in our coordination efforts. No matter what, you and your team will always be welcome.

Safe Streets

On Safe Streets, I would disagree with your claims about a "shroud of secrecy." This is a program that has been around since 2007, when former Mayor Sheila Dixon brought Safe Streets to Baltimore. However, under my leadership and through MONSE's oversight and technical assistance, my administration has vastly expanded the transparency around the critical work being done by Safe Streets frontline violence interrupters. Information about the program is readily accessible to the public. MONSE shares annual Safe Streets reports on the agency's [website](#), regularly shares mediation data on its [social media pages](#), and has shared information publicly with the City Council about the program on numerous occasions.

Additionally, Safe Streets has been academically evaluated and shown to have a direct, positive impact on gun violence reduction in the communities they serve.

In March 2023, Dr. Daniel Webster of Johns Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health—one of the top violence prevention researchers in the world—released [the second-ever evaluation examining the efficacy of the Safe Streets program from its inception in 2007](#). The evaluation found that across all sites, the program was associated with a statistically significant 23% reduction in shootings. That study also estimated the social and economic benefits of the program, projecting that for every dollar spent on the program, between \$7.20 to \$19.20 is saved, depending on the method used to estimate the costs of shootings.

As part of MONSE's budget, Safe Streets funding and spending is already subject to oversight from my office and the City Council. I will again take the opportunity to remind you that we have significantly overhauled the program and internal oversight to ensure that past practices of using false names on contracting documents have been rectified and Pre-Audits no longer requires names on contracts. The OIG report on this issue from November 2024 acknowledges that MONSE has made improvements to agency management of contracts under Director Mavronis.

I am concerned that you have continued to make these claims publicly, forcing us to respond in the media,

rather than meeting with my team or MONSE to facilitate your requests. MONSE has repeatedly attempted to schedule time with you to discuss this very issue and has been met with silence. As you know, this is counter to the claims you make in your letter from yesterday, and such inaccurate assertions do real damage to the credibility of everyone involved.

I appreciate you acknowledging that some information about Safe Streets is not prudent to be shared publicly. I will reiterate an offer that MONSE leadership has made to your office repeatedly: whenever you have questions about an individual's connection to Safe Streets or any violence intervention program, please do not hesitate to reach out to MONSE or my team. In the spirit of partnership, I would again like to invite you to sit down with my office and the community-based organizations who operate the program and employ Safe Streets workers, LifeBridge Health's Center for Hope and Catholic Charities, to go over your concerns and share any necessary information you feel may have been withheld.

SideStep

The initial SideStep youth diversion pilot program—a partnership between MONSE, BPD, DJS, and youth-serving providers—was designed and developed as one tool to respond to the needs of youth and families while reducing youth recidivism for first-time offenders. This pilot, which operated in the Western District from 2022 to 2024, was intended as a limited test of concept to inform the future of youth diversion work in Baltimore.

As shared with the Office of the Inspector General and members of the media, funding that went to organizations to support SideStep referrals during the pilot, and fund general youth opportunity, work in line with my administration's commitment to our young people. Some of those organizations allocated dollars to incentivize participation in their programs, however those incentives were not part of the pilot program design.

As a result of findings from the pilot, MONSE and BPD have spent this year redesigning the City's youth diversion efforts and laying the foundation for the future of this work, in partnership with DJS. This team has embedded stronger oversight mechanisms, clarified program processes, policies and procedures, and removed singular points of failure, including establishing rigorous victim notification and support protocols. DJS have already been invited to be a formal part of this work as a continuation of their involvement in the Western District pilot. This is exactly the role of pilot programs, to test concepts, identify improvements, and ensure stronger efficacy in future iterations of proposed programs.

As a reminder, we reached out to include your office in this work and BPD leadership reached out to discuss youth diversion efforts back in 2024. We understand your concerns about diversion work as it has previously existed. I would like to reiterate the offer for your office to be a part of the future of this work and look forward to continuing this conversation.

On the issue of juvenile records, we stand by the response that the Law Department provided to your office. The law that the City cited in its June 11, 2025 e-mail correspondence to Angela Galeano in your office (namely, Section 3A-8-27(a)(2)(ii) of the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article of the Maryland Code) was time limited, and allowed the Baltimore City Mayor's Office to receive juvenile criminal records, for that limited time, to run a pilot program sanctioned by the Maryland General Assembly. 2019 Maryland Laws Ch. 37, § 3 (enacting the exception and sunseting it after six years and a month on September 30, 2025).

This state law was explicit that the Mayor's Office received a time-limited ability to receive the records, but remained, like every other holder of juvenile records, unable to redisclose them, even in response to a subpoena, unless state law permitted that redisclosure (for example, to the Department of Juvenile Services, which is permitted). The expiration of Subsection (a)(2)(ii) in this state law allowing the Mayor's Office to receive the records has no bearing on the long-standing prohibition in this state that juvenile criminal

records cannot be disclosed, even with a subpoena: “A police record concerning a child is confidential and shall be maintained separate from those of adults. Its contents may not be divulged, by subpoena or otherwise, except by order of the court upon good cause shown.” Md. Code, Cts. & Jud. Proc., § 3-8A-27(a)(1). That language remains unchanged and reflects the General Assembly’s long policy determination that those records, held by anyone, cannot be disclosed unless permitted by the General Assembly in an exception it fashions in state law. A violation of this prohibition on the secrecy of juvenile records is a crime. Md. Code, Gen. Prov., §§ 4-301(a)(1); 4-401-403.

Victim Services

MONSE has coordinated victim services in partnership with the Baltimore Police Department and the States Attorney’s Office since July 2023. As you are aware, through this partnership, MONSE receives referrals that originate from BPD, the community, other partners, and individuals directly seeking support.

Our top priority is ensuring that those in need of services receive them, no matter which office is the primary provider. For cases that follow the normal process for SAO and BPD, MONSE defers to SAO and BPD victim services—and only steps in to provide support in those cases where the SAO and BPD are unable to. As was clearly stated in the [PSP report](#), the SAO’s victim services are only available to those involved in legal proceedings, which should never be a barrier to services, especially for those concerned for their safety.

Previously, MONSE, BPD, and your office would meet weekly in order to determine which agency should take the lead on a given case. These meetings helped to prevent duplication of outreach, and also ensured that the States Attorney’s Office was aware of any witnesses who were referred to MONSE who were (1) not contacted to testify or (2) were afraid to testify because of witness intimidation or fear of retaliation. We also worked together to form an interagency process map to guide referrals. As part of that process, in these weekly meetings, MONSE shared the names of their victim services clients and took the additional step of sending a weekly list of clients to BPD and the SAO. Your office cancelled those meetings without explanation on October 24, 2025.

For those who reach out directly to MONSE for support, MONSE will continue to communicate with the SAO and BPD to establish the lead agency, determine the best course of action, and ensure a warm handoff, if applicable.

As you wrote in your letter, “True partnership reflects healthy bi-directional communication, no ulterior agendas, transparency of relationships information and records with partners, which is all my office seeks.” We agree and want to work with you in that spirit to ensure this process works for all partners involved. As always, our priority is ensuring those in need of victim services receive them.

Proposed Task Force

Lastly, I want to address your proposed task force to work through solutions to the concerns you raised in your letter. I appreciate you being solutions oriented, however, I want to state unequivocally that any group gathering to discuss these issues that do not include myself, senior members of my administration, and MONSE leadership would be woefully uninformed and would not be positioned to make progress on any of the above concerns. I believe you will agree that that is a non-starter.

More importantly, your proposal runs counter to the agreement that we made, in person, during the meeting brokered by our shared friend Billy Murphy, Jr., in April 2024. I would remind you of the public commitment that we made in a [joint statement](#) at that time to overcome miscommunication between us and our offices. I have remained committed to that goal, even to this day.

In conclusion, I want to thank you for your letter. I hope this response helps to assuage your concerns and leads you to reconsider terminating direct coordination and communication with MONSE. We agree that

there is room for improvement in this partnership, and have suggested ways that we can collaborate to deliver even better, more unified services to our residents—especially those at greatest risk of engaging in or being victims of violence. Our ultimate goal is the same: to continue historic public safety progress in our city. We are best positioned to do so when we are all working together. Anything else is a distraction from the real work before us: saving lives and reducing violence in Baltimore.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Brandon M. Scott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brandon M. Scott
Mayor
City of Baltimore

CC: Police Commissioner Richard Worley
Director Stephanie Marvonis
City Solicitor Ebony Thompson
Mr. Terence Nash
Mr. Jeremy Biddle