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## Tennessee State Senate

NASHVILLE

May 28, 2024

Governor Bill Lee  
State Capitol, First Floor  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Dear Governor Lee,

Thank you for your strong support of my efforts to Make Memphis Matter, particularly with regard to combatting the ongoing crime crisis in my beloved city, the city your mom once called home. New laws that strengthen our state's bail system, allow police to enforce important traffic safety laws, and hold our District Attorneys accountable will improve public safety in Memphis and throughout Tennessee.

As pleased as I was with these legislative successes, we cannot rest. The crime occurring in Memphis is affecting our collective psyche. Memphians are changing their patterns and behaviors. I've heard from constituents who no longer participate in community events or venture into Memphis to enjoy our restaurants. I have friends who no longer allow their spouses to get gas on their way home from work. Most recently, I have heard from worried parents who are refusing to allow their children the opportunity to get summer jobs out of fear something might happen to them while working. Our quality of life is diminishing. Just last month it was reported that 95 people were shot and 25 were killed on our streets. This level of carnage cannot continue. It is unsustainable! My city has become a war zone!

With this level of crime, we are witnessing the hollowing out of Memphis' middle class. Businesses are closing, leaving, or never opening because of rampant crime. Fearful Memphians are selling their homes and moving their families to what they consider to be safer communities. We are losing a generation of young people to a life of crime, or worse yet, to a death from crime. If we do not get control of our massive crime crisis, Memphis will become the new Detroit: a failed American city! Like Detroit, we will become a city with two very different populations: the extremely poor, who couldn't afford to leave, and the extremely wealthy, who could afford the security required to stay. Memphis' middle-class will be gone!

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As any history professor, or economist, will tell you, no city, county, state, or nation has ever survived without a thriving middle-class. We must act now to protect Memphis' poorest residents and prevent a massive Memphis exodus of our middle-class.

There have been numerous attempts by former Mayor Jim Strickland and now Mayor Paul Young to address the danger our city currently finds itself in because of the out-of-control crime. Despite the best efforts of former Mayor Strickland and Mayor Young, I am growing increasingly concerned this issue may be beyond local government's capacity to solve alone.

Early in our last legislative session, we met to discuss your important school choice legislation. During that conversation, you made what I thought to be a very interesting comment. You stated, "the state can't solve Memphis' crime problem *for* them, but the state can solve Memphis' crime problem *with* them." I have thought a great deal about your statement since that day in your office.

Therefore, I am requesting a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss the possibility of your administration contracting with a credible, high-profile, public safety consulting firm to serve as the state's expert consultant in Memphis to provide a comprehensive plan to reduce crime. Numerous respected organizations led by retired law enforcement professionals are available to identify potential strategies and solutions to our crime problem. Perhaps a new set of eyes to an old problem can be brought to Memphis to aid our public safety efforts.

Mr. William Bratton, who served as the NYPD Commissioner during the Rudy Giuliani administration, helped make New York City the safest big city in America. He now leads one such public safety consulting firm called Teneo. As I envision a possible relationship with Teneo, the firm would operate on-the-ground in Memphis with the full cooperation of the city administration, the sheriff, and police chief to assess current policies, procedures, and develop new strategies to tackle crime. As part of any crime reduction plan, I would expect them to provide regular updates to you along with administrative recommendations, legislative recommendations to the General Assembly, and policy & procedural recommendations to Mayor Young, Sheriff Bonner, and the Memphis City Council.

However, we must take great care to avoid the "*restorative justice schemers*" who operate in this space offering public safety consulting. The General Assembly just spent much of the last session passing legislation undoing the damage these organizations have inflicted on our criminal justice system. Through litigation, threat of litigation, and the acquiescence of compliant District Attorneys, restorative justice schemers attempt to accomplish that which they cannot accomplish legislatively.

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In my opinion, organizations such as Just City, Decarcerate Memphis, Vera Institute of Justice, and Justice Innovation Lab do not share our Tennessee values. These out-of-state funded groups support restorative justice schemes which serve to ignore crime victims, defund our police, and advocate for cashless bail making Tennesseans less safe.

I look forward to hearing from you soon to explore this recommendation further. Tennessee cannot succeed if its most famous city is sliding into chaos. We need your help to stop the slide. I am grateful for your support of new laws that will make our community safer. Much more work needs to be done, and working together we will Make Memphis Matter!

Sincerely,



Senator Brent Taylor  
District 31

cc: Lt. Governor Randy McNally  
Speaker of the House Cameron Sexton  
Senate Finance Committee Chairman Bo Watson  
Chief of Staff, Joseph Williams  
Commissioner of Finance and Administration, Jim Bryson  
Commissioner of Safety and Homeland Security, Jeff Long  
Memphis Mayor Paul Young  
Mr. William J. Bratton, Teneo