

City of Virginia Beach Council Member

2401 Courthouse Drive

Building #1

Virginia Beach, VA 23456

Dear Council Members,

I am writing you on behalf of the nearly 500 Police Officers and Detectives represented by the Virginia Beach Police Benevolent Association. Usually, this is the time of year that you hear from me as it relates to the budget. While an important issue, I am contacting you today for a different reason. On the morning of March 27<sup>th</sup> our citizens, and seemingly the world, woke to the news of violence at our ocean front resort area. Now our police officers must watch and listen as pundits who lack expertise hijack the true narrative. They must watch and listen as some of their elected officials respond with surprise to these events. The same men and women who were out that night and every night, and who are willing to risk their lives for strangers, now find themselves having to defend their actions. Actions that took place in a quarter of a second and under circumstances that would send others fleeing in terror.

Allow me to be clear on several matters. First, the actions of the officers this night should be commended, not condemned. Once again officers ran into gunfire. They rendered aid to the wounded. They coordinated rescue efforts. They comforted the panicked. They searched for the perpetrators under hostile conditions and at great risk to their safety. The officers responded to the chaos started by criminals. They did exactly what you ask and expect of them. We have not heard a public acknowledgement of this from many of you. We have yet to hear concern for the officer run over by a car. Undoubtedly, we will never hear any concern for the officer who had to take the life of another. As bodies fall throughout our city some of you believe the solution is to put time, effort, and money into investigating the police, as if we are the problem. I suggest this effort is better directed at finding a true solution rather than using precious time and resources grandstanding.

Next, what occurred that night seems to come as a surprise to everyone but the police officers. I assure you that this increase of violence has not happened over night. A decade of neglect has helped lead us here. The concerns brought forward by the PBA over the last decade have been ignored, marginalized, and explained away as mere gripes from "disgruntled" employees, even by some in our own command structure. The warning signs have been obvious for anyone willing to see them and willing to listen. Instead, the false narrative of "everything is fine", a narrative put forth by people looking to protect their own positions, was believed. It should now be clear to you all that you have been deceived.

One of the responsibilities of local government is to provide for the safety of its citizens. The Virginia Beach Police Department has a manpower shortage of 100 officers. This equates to an entire precinct. It is beyond time to address this with real solutions like many of you have already pledged to do. Support for your police can not be a bumper sticker platitude. You must stop looking for short cuts and do what we all know must be done. We are lacking in manpower. We are lacking in pay. We are lacking in benefits. We are lacking it technology. It is time to act. Your citizens, business owners, and Police deserve better.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Luciano". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Brian Luciano