



Brandon M. Scott
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HB 1221

March 3, 2020

TO: The Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: The Honorable Brandon M. Scott, President of the Baltimore City Council

RE: HOUSE BILL 1221 – Public Information Act – Personnel and Investigatory Records – Complaints Against Law Enforcement Officers

POSITION: OPPOSE

I write to you in **opposition** to House Bill 1221.

During my entire career as a public official, I have been advocating for increased transparency and accountability around police misconduct. I do not feel that this bill adequately addresses the need for reform in addressing police misconduct. Its limited scope only gives off the illusion of transparency while preventing the full disclosure of records related to police misconduct. It is important to show that we are fully committed to true transparency and accountability, and unfortunately, I do not feel that this bill sufficiently addresses concerns around transparency.

I strongly believe that the public has a right to know whether their complaints of police misconduct are being adequately investigated by the police department. In addition, making these records available helps facilitate equity and equality, making sure that all communities have their complaints investigated the same way. This transparency allows the public to know that all complaints, regardless of race, gender, disability or socioeconomic status of the complainant are taken seriously and correspondingly, that all officers are held to the same level of accountability. These are crucial reasons that I support amendments to HB 1221 that would allow the disclosure of:

- All use of force investigations, regardless of whether it causes death or serious bodily injury;
- All discrimination or bias misconduct, not only “prohibited discrimination” as the bill currently states;
- Misconduct committed during criminal investigations, like those documented in the Baltimore City Gun Trace Task Force;
- Criminal activity by officers; and
- Investigations into misconduct regardless of the outcome.

Unfortunately, in Baltimore City, we have seen time and time again the need for independent police oversight. One frustration that the community has voiced is that when they do report police misconduct, they have no way of determining if an investigation was carried out and what consequence was given to the officer. Without the above amendments,



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this bill does not truly give communities the tools they need to hold police departments accountable.

Here in Baltimore City, our police department is working to rebuild trust with the community. This bill does not go far enough to help restore trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Currently, this bill does not ensure worthwhile and meaningful reform. Therefore, I am **opposed** to House Bill 1221, unless it is amended to allow more meaningful transparency over police misconduct.