



Councilman Mark Conway
Baltimore City Council *Fourth District*

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TO: Chair William C. Smith, Jr.; Vice Chair Jeff Waldstreicher; members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Mark Conway (District 4, Baltimore City Council; Chair, Public Safety and Government Operations Committee)

RE: SB894 (Baltimore City – Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner)

POSITION: SUPPORT

I am writing in strong support of SB894 (Baltimore City – Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner), which would strike a specific line in Article II of the Baltimore City Charter that currently limits Baltimore City's ability to legislate over the Baltimore Police Department. This bill would complete the process of returning local control of BPD to the City after roughly 160 years of state control.

Local control over the Baltimore Police Department has been a long time in the making. In the 1860s, statutory authority over the department was taken by the state and for a century and a half, control over BPD rested with the State of Maryland, not Baltimore City. In 2021, state legislators authorized a ballot initiative that would decide once and for all whether Baltimore City would control its police department, which passed in November 2022 with nearly 83% of city residents voting in favor. However, language limiting the powers of the city council still exists in state law.

Over the past several years, the City has conducted a democratic, community-led process to engage residents on what local control should look like. We could not have gotten to this point without the efforts of the Local Control Advisory Board, advocates who have pushed tirelessly for this legislation, and our partners in the city administration and Annapolis. Following consideration of similar bills last General Assembly session, the Baltimore City Council collaborated with Mayor Brandon Scott's administration to enact two bills codifying the police department in the city charter and code as with any other city agency. Now, we stand united in asking our Annapolis legislators to strike the last vestige of state control.

The taxpayers of Baltimore deserve full local control over our police department. I urge a favorable report on this legislation.

Sincerely,

Mark S. Conway, Jr.