

SB0894_ArielleJuberg_Fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Arielle Juberg

Position: FAV

Dear Chair Smith and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs. I am a resident of District 8. **I am testifying in support of SB0894.**

I am a former Baltimore City resident. I still visit the city every week to shop, attend church services, and visit attractions. I am joining the majority of city residents who want Baltimore City to have authority to oversee and govern its own police department.

Decisions about policing in Baltimore City should be made by those who understand the community's dynamics and are directly accountable to residents.

Local control empowers city residents to implement tailored strategies to combat crime, improve community relations, and foster trust in law enforcement. This lack of local control means that critical decisions about policing in the city are being made by people who don't know Baltimore. Their decisions are driven by broader state-level considerations rather than the specific needs and concerns of those neighborhoods.

This legislation represents the final and urgent step towards securing the autonomy necessary for Baltimore City to effectively govern its own police department. It's time to put the power back where it belongs—in the hands of those who know and care about Baltimore. Supporting SB0894 is not just about completing a process—it's about reclaiming city residents' voice, safety, and future. It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB0894.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Arielle Juberg
3411 Upton Road
Baltimore, MD 21234
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore



Showing Up for Racial Justice

SB894_AreleneOgurick_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Arlene Ogurick

Position: FAV

3/5/2024

Arlene C. Ogurick
Baltimore, MD 21210

TESTIMONY ON SB894 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Baltimore City – Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Arlene Ogurick

My name is Arlene Ogurick and I am a resident of District 41. I am supporting testimony in support of SB894, Baltimore City – Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner.

I am a member of the League of Women Voters and Chesapeake Climate Action Network. As a life-long Baltimore City, I believe it is past time to bring Baltimore's relation to its Police Department into the 21st century.

We are one of the last 2 cities in the country without local control. Times have changed since 1860, when Maryland law makers seized control of BPD during bloody fighting between pro-slavery Democratic Party and xenophobic Know-Nothing Party which ran City Hall and Police Dept.

Since then, these changes have included:

- 1896 - Klondike Gold Rush
- 1903 - Flight of the Wright Brothers
- 1920 - 19th amendment to US Constitution grants women the right to vote
- 1969 - Neil Armstrong walks on the moon
- 2007 - Apple i-phone introduced

AND still in 2024 residents of Baltimore, MD do not have control of our local police department! Baltimoreans are tired, frustrated and appalled at this continuing injustice. State legislators, you must correct this situation. On November 12, 2022 - 80% of voting Baltimoreans approved ballot Question H supporting local control of BPD. This issue is about racial justice, police accountability and representative democracy. Please support Baltimore constituents' clearly stated desire. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB894.**

SB894 Local control CLB.pdf

Uploaded by: Christina Nemphos

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs. I am a resident of Maryland District 40 and live in the Medifield neighborhood of Baltimore. **I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 894 and believe in it strongly. I spent several days canvassing for local control in the Fall of 2022.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

I am here today to express my strong support for HB732, which would grant Baltimore City the authority to oversee and govern its own police department.

Unfortunately, under the current system, Baltimore City's police department is managed by the state of Maryland, creating a disconnect between those who enforce the law and those who live under it. Without the authority to oversee and govern the police department, city residents are unable to truly hold the police accountable. We demand transparency and accountability from those who enforce the law, and local control is the key to ensuring that city residents' voices are heard and their concerns are addressed.

Decisions about policing in Baltimore City should be made by those who understand the community's dynamics and are directly accountable to its residents.

Local control empowers the city to swiftly implement tailored strategies to combat crime, improve community relations, and foster trust in law enforcement. This lack of local control means that critical decisions about policing in Baltimore are being made by people who don't know Baltimore and, quite frankly, don't care about Baltimore. Their decisions are driven by broader state-level considerations rather than the specific needs and concerns of the city's neighborhoods.

Why should the residents of Baltimore need to travel to Annapolis and lobby lawmakers from across the state in order to impact policy change in their own, locally-funded, police department? As long as the tax dollars of Baltimore citizens are used to pay out police misconduct settlements, the citizens should have direct, local control of their police department.

This legislation represents the final and urgent step towards securing the autonomy necessary for Baltimore City to effectively govern its own police department. It's time to put the power back where it belongs—in the hands of those who know and care about Baltimore. Supporting HB732 is not just about completing a process—it's about Baltimore's people reclaiming their voice, their safety, and their future.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of Senate Bill 894.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Christina L Bell (formerly Nemphos)
1301 W 42nd Street
Baltimore, Md 21211
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

SB894 Testimony (Councilman Mark Conway _ Favorabl

Uploaded by: Councilman Mark Conway

Position: FAV



Councilman Mark Conway
Baltimore City Council *Fourth District*

100 N. Holliday Street, Suite 550 • Baltimore, Maryland 21202
(410) 396-4830 • mark.conway@baltimorecity.gov

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.

SB894 Local control Testimony (Cramer).pdf

Uploaded by: David Cramer

Position: FAV

**Testimony to Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
SB894, Local Control of Baltimore City Police Department
Position: Support**

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with the coalition, Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs. I am a **native Baltimorean** of over 70 years and resident of district **43A**.

I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 894.

I am here today to express my strong support for **SB894**, which would grant Baltimore City the authority to oversee and govern its own police department.

This legislation represents the final and urgent step towards securing the autonomy necessary for Baltimore City to effectively govern its own police department. It's time to put the power back where it belongs—in the hands of those who know and care about Baltimore. Supporting SB894 is not just about completing a process—it's about reclaiming our voice, our safety, and our future.

Unfortunately, Baltimore City's control of its police department is currently in a city legislative and legal no-man's land with previous state legislation incomplete. This is despite city resident support expressed through a referendum in 2022 and City Council passing authorization in 2023.

Now that Baltimore City is united in its approach to affective local control, we urge you to give your support of **SB894**.

Sincerely,

David Cramer
6150 Chinguapin Parkway
Baltimore, MD 21239
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore



Showing Up for Racial Justice

SB894_EricLewitus_FAVORABLE.pdf

Uploaded by: Eric Lewitus

Position: FAV

March 3, 2024

Eric Lewitus

Ednor Gardens, Baltimore City

TESTIMONY ON SB894

Baltimore City - Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner

TO: Senator Will Smith, Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, and the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Eric Lewitus

My name is Eric Lewitus and I am a resident of District 14. I am submitting this testimony on SB894 - Baltimore City - Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner.

I am a Senior Scientist in infectious disease research at a government institute and affiliated with Jews United for Justice. I am testifying for enacting a City Charter amendment to define the basic powers and responsibilities of the Baltimore Police Department in line with local control. As 83% of Baltimore voters asserted, our city has an opportunity to reimagine how it serves its citizens. Any delay in implementing local control wastes that opportunity.

Baltimore City has the highest opioid overdose death rate in the country. It is twice that of the next highest-ranking city. I specialize in HIV-1 research. Substance use is a high risk behavior for HIV-1 acquisition and 10% of new HIV-1 diagnoses in the United States are attributable to injection. As the state of Maryland continues to funnel resources into law-enforcement solutions to substance use, Baltimore is not making streets safer or citizens healthier. Instead, law-enforcement measures serve only to criminalize the behavior of those living with substance use problems in lieu of helping them access treatment. Specifically, BPD inhibits people using controlled substances from accessing harm reduction programs and increases community transmission of HIV and hepatitis. By keeping substance use within the remit of BPD we are reinforcing a targeted war, not against drugs, but against our neighbors — disproportionately our Black neighbors. At best, this is a bad solution. At worst, it creates more problems, which reverberate across generations. This is not just my opinion. The World Health Organization, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS have proposed a set of evidence-based intervention strategies to alleviate the health and safety burden of people who inject drugs, including: needle/syringe exchange, opioid substitution treatment, HIV counseling/testing, condom distribution, HIV education campaigns, and hepatitis vaccination/treatment. They propose no police involvement whatsoever. I, like

most Baltimore residents, want access to a local electorate that can act on the wisdom of their constituents. Presently, my local electorate has no control over BPD, which means I and my neighbors have no control over the safety of our city. This is unacceptable.

In November of 2022, voters were faced with two realities: that Baltimore is the only jurisdiction in Maryland that does not have local control of its police department; and there was something they could do about it. Ballot Question H asked voters whether to establish through a Charter Amendment a "Baltimore City Police Department, the head of which is the Police Commissioner", which would transfer the legislative authority to regulate BPD from lawmakers in Annapolis to the Baltimore City Council. We said yes, 83% of us. Voters overwhelmingly supported local control because it allows City Council to regulate surveillance equipment purchases, collect data on use-of-force and arrests, author guidance on the use of chokeholds, no-knock warrants, and policing of First Amendment protests, and, in line with the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021, set up civilian Police Accountability Boards. We voted yes on Question H because these are things we want, as do the many counties across Maryland that have implemented police accountability measures through local PD control.

I want the Baltimore City Council to have legislative authority to make changes to BPD policy. The Senate Delegation must finish what we started and expeditiously pass SB894 to fulfill the will of the people and codify local control of the BPD.

SB894 Local control.pdf

Uploaded by: Erica Palmisano

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs. I am a resident of 12A. **I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 894.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

I am here today to express my strong support for HB732, which would grant Baltimore City the authority to oversee and govern its own police department.

Unfortunately, under the current system, the police department is managed by the state of Maryland, creating a disconnect between those who enforce the law and those who live under it. Without the authority to oversee and govern the police department, accountability remains elusive. Residents have demanded transparency and accountability from those who enforce the law, and local control is the key to ensuring that their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed.

Decisions about policing in Baltimore City should be made by those who understand the community's dynamics and are directly accountable to its residents.

Local control empowers residents to swiftly implement tailored strategies to combat crime, improve community relations, and foster trust in law enforcement. This lack of local control means that critical decisions about policing in the city are being made by people who don't know Baltimore and, quite frankly, don't care about Baltimore. Their decisions are driven by broader state-level considerations rather than the specific needs and concerns of their neighborhoods.

This legislation represents the final and urgent step towards securing the autonomy necessary for Baltimore City to effectively govern its own police department. It's time to put the power back where it belongs—in the hands of those who know and care about Baltimore. Supporting SB894 is not just about completing a process—it's about residents reclaiming their voice, their safety, and their future.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of Senate Bill 894.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Erica Palmisano
5580 Vantage Point Rd, Apt 5, Columbia, MD
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

SB894_HannahZinker_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Hannah Zinker

Position: FAV

Hannah Zinker
March 5, 2024



TESTIMONY ON SB894 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Baltimore City - Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Hannah Zinker

My name is Hannah Zinker, and I am a resident of District 46 in Baltimore City. On behalf of Jews United for Justice, I am submitting this testimony in support of SB894, Baltimore City—Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner. JUFJ organizes 6,000 Jewish Marylanders and allies from across the state in support of local and state campaigns for social, racial, and economic justice. I have dedicated my professional life to working against injustices in our world— becoming a lawyer and now working for a nonprofit that engages young people in service work and social justice learning. In our democracy, the will of the people and their ability to take action is our greatest strength— and the people of Baltimore City have spoken. In 2022, over 82% of Baltimoreans voted to make the Baltimore Police Department a city agency, as a way to restore power to the people through local control. However, to codify local control, the Maryland General Assembly must remove a minor provision in the Baltimore City Charter that continues to prohibit Baltimore from having control over the Baltimore Police Department.

Baltimore City is the only locality in Maryland with limited control over its own police department, and one of only two in our entire country. Because of this, Baltimore City is unable to meaningfully enforce police accountability or reform measures that would benefit both residents and officers. Other jurisdictions may use their local control of police departments to take safety measures like requiring the use of body-worn cameras or collecting data on use-of-force incidents and arrests. Such steps keep police departments accountable to the people and allow officials to make changes that best suit their communities' needs. Baltimore City residents should have these opportunities but have not for over 150 years. This is a racially unjust and insulting policy, signaling to the majority-Black residents of Baltimore and their officials that they are not trusted to govern themselves.

If Baltimore establishes local control of their police department, community members and officers could build a more just, more effective, more trustworthy BPD. Until this happens, Baltimoreans have no hope for transparency and accountability in their city's policing.

The people are waiting for their voices to finally be heard. I respectfully urge this committee to make this a reality and return a favorable report on SB894.

SB894 Local control Testimony Template.pdf

Uploaded by: Holly Powell

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs. I am a resident of **District 46. I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 894.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

I am here today to express my strong support for HB732, which would grant Baltimore City the authority to oversee and govern its own police department.

Unfortunately, under the current system, Baltimore City's police department is managed by the state of Maryland, creating a disconnect between those who enforce the law and those who live under it. Without the authority to oversee and govern the police department, city residents are unable to truly hold the police accountable. We demand transparency and accountability from those who enforce the law, and local control is the key to ensuring that city residents' voices are heard and their concerns are addressed.

Decisions about policing in Baltimore City should be made by those who understand the community's dynamics and are directly accountable to its residents.

Local control empowers the city to swiftly implement tailored strategies to combat crime, improve community relations, and foster trust in law enforcement. This lack of local control means that critical decisions about policing in Baltimore are being made by people who don't know Baltimore and, quite frankly, don't care about Baltimore. Their decisions are driven by broader state-level considerations rather than the specific needs and concerns of the city's neighborhoods.

This legislation represents the final and urgent step towards securing the autonomy necessary for Baltimore City to effectively govern its own police department. It's time to put the power back where it belongs—in the hands of those who know and care about Baltimore. Supporting HB732 is not just about completing a process—it's about Baltimore's people reclaiming their voice, their safety, and their future.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of Senate Bill 894.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Holly Powell

2308 Cambridge Street

Baltimore, Maryland 21224

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

SB894 Support John Ford.pdf

Uploaded by: John Ford

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs. I am a resident of District 46, a resident and dedicated employee of Baltimore City, and active in the Canton community of Baltimore City, including membership in the Community Association Board. These views are my own and I do not speak for any of these organizations. **I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 894.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

I am here today to express my strong support for HB732, which would grant Baltimore City the authority to oversee and govern its own police department.

Unfortunately, under the current system, Baltimore City's police department is managed by the state of Maryland, creating a disconnect between those who enforce the law and those who live under it. Without the authority to oversee and govern the police department, city residents are unable to truly hold the police accountable. We demand transparency and accountability from those who enforce the law, and local control is the key to ensuring that city residents' voices are heard and their concerns are addressed.

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It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of Senate Bill 894.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

John Ford

529 S East Ave, Baltimore, MD 21224

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

2024-03-04 Senate JPR- LDF Testimony in Support of

Uploaded by: Kristina Roth

Position: FAV

March 4, 2024

Submitted Electronically

William Smith, Chair
Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401 - 1991

**RE: SB 732–Baltimore City – Control Over Powers of Police
Commissioner**

Dear Chair Smith and Vice Chair Waldstreicher:

On behalf of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF),¹ we submit this written testimony in support of Senate Bill 894 (“SB 894”) and House Bill 732 (“HB 732”), the Baltimore City – Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner Act. If passed by the Maryland General Assembly, this legislation would amend Baltimore City’s Charter by striking language that prohibits a city ordinance or act, other than from the mayor, from “conflicting, impeding or obstructing the powers of the police commissioner.”² This move would effectively authorize the Baltimore City Council to pass ordinances that provide oversight of the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD), regulating their operation and conduct. For more than a decade, Baltimore City residents have pushed for the Baltimore City Council to have local legislative control over BPD and to increase civilian participation in the oversight and accountability of a city-operated police department. In January 2024, Baltimore City enacted two ordinances to advance the transfer of legislative oversight of BPD to the Baltimore City Council. First, ordinance 23-0449 embeds key general provisions regulating qualifications and appointments within BPD, compensation, labor relations, and apportionment of BPD officers in each district, to the Baltimore City Code, relocating it from the Public Laws of Baltimore. The second ordinance 23-0445 sets forth a charter amendment to establish the objectives, powers, and duties of BPD, the police commissioner, and officers. This charter amendment will be considered by Baltimore voters in November of 2024. While Baltimore City lost local control of its own police department,

¹ Since its founding in 1940, LDF has used litigation, policy advocacy, public education, and community organizing strategies to achieve racial justice and equity in the areas of education, economic justice, political participation, and criminal justice. It has been a separate organization from the NAACP since 1957. LDF’s work to address police violence and misconduct dates back to its inception. *See, e.g., Shepherd v. Florida*, 341 U.S. 50 (1951) (reversing the wrongful interracial rape convictions of Black men who were brutally beaten by sheriff’s deputies in an attempt to force confessions). Today, LDF’s Justice in Public Safety Project uses litigation, policy advocacy, research, community organizing, and strategic communications to transform public safety systems, advance police accountability, and prevent and remedy the impact of racial bias in public safety.

² *See* S.B. 894, 2024 Leg., 445th Gen. Assemb., Reg. Sess. (Md. 2024) available at, <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2024RS/bills/sb/sb0894F.pdf>

law enforcement has engaged in disproportionate misconduct against Black Baltimoreans for generations. Within the context of this history, Baltimore City voters have decisively supported the steps required to complete local control of BPD, and that support is only growing. It thus remains imperative for the Maryland General Assembly to remove the limiting language from the Baltimore City Charter through the passage of SB 894.

I. **Baltimore City Residents Must Regain Authority Over its Local Police Department.**

Baltimore City residents and officials have studied and debated the transfer of control of BPD for years.³ Unlike all other jurisdictions in Maryland, Baltimore City has had limited power over its police department since the 1860s when state officials took over the city's police force. In the 1850s, Baltimore's police department had been used to execute the political will of the anti-immigrant "Know-Nothing" party, which held a majority control of the Baltimore City Council and Maryland General Assembly.⁴ Yet, in the over 160 years that state officials have controlled the BPD, the agency continues to grapple with corruption, including the criminal acts of the BPD's Gun Trace Task Force.⁵ While Baltimore City taxpayers pay civil settlements⁶ for police misconduct,⁷ the City Council has been unable to adopt laws and policies to hold police officers accountable for misconduct.⁸ Instead, Baltimore City officials and residents have just the 90-day Maryland General Assembly session to ask state officials to enact laws to increase police accountability and other public safety issues that are entirely local to Baltimore City.⁹

³ See Danielle Kushner, *The Community Oversight Task Force's Recommendations for Strengthening Police Accountability and Police-Community Relations in Baltimore City*, COMMUNITY OVERSIGHT TASK FORCE 38 (Aug. 2018), <https://consentdecree.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Final%20COTF%20Report.pdf>.

⁴ See e.g., George A. Nilson, The Abell Foundation, *The Baltimore Police Department: Understanding its status as a state agency*, 2-3 (March 2019), <https://abell.org/publication/baltimore-police-department-understanding-its-status-as-a-state-agency/>; See also Danielle Kushner, *The Community Oversight Task Force's Recommendations for Strengthening Police Accountability and Police-Community Relations in Baltimore City*, COMMUNITY OVERSIGHT TASK FORCE 38 (Aug. 2018), <https://consentdecree.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Final%20COTF%20Report.pdf>.

⁵ Justin Fenton, *Baltimore expected to pay \$8 million to settle Gun Trace Task Force lawsuit*, WASH. POST (Nov. 15, 2020), https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/baltimore-expected-to-pay-8-million-to-settle-gun-trace-task-force-lawsuit/2020/11/15/d3e8be22-2785-11eb-9b14-ad872157ebc9_story.html.

⁶ The Fiscal and Policy Note for SB 894 does not anticipate this bill to have any material effect on Baltimore City's finance. available at https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2024RS/fnotes/bil_0004/sb0894.pdf.

⁷ Jayne Miller, *Report details taxpayer payouts in Baltimore police misconduct cases*, WBALTV (Jan. 31, 2020), <https://www.wbalvtv.com/article/report-payout-baltimore-police-misconduct-cases/30733232#>.

⁸ Edward Ericson Jr., *As City Council and public clamor for police body cameras, mayor hires group to clarify questions raised*, BALT. SUN (Nov. 4, 2014), <https://www.baltimoresun.com/citypaper/bcp-as-city-council-and-public-clamor-for-police-body-cameras-mayor-hires-group-to-clarify-questions-rai-20141104-story.html>.

⁹ Even so, attempts to pass laws that regulate BPD fail when introduced in the Maryland General Assembly, such as the 2016-2017 effort to require the BPD Commissioner to notify Baltimore City officials of the development of new tactics, technologies, and devices. See H.B. 58, 2017 Leg., 437th Gen. Assemb., Reg. Sess. (Md. 2017), available at <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/hb0058?ys=2017RS&search=True>.

Black residents in Maryland and Baltimore are disproportionately policed and more likely to be subjects of police violence. In Baltimore, where 63% of residents were Black, 90% of all police use of force incidents were against Black people between 2015 and 2019, whereas just 7.3% of force incidents were against white people.¹⁰ The killing of Freddie Gray in 2015, and the police response to the uprising that followed, demonstrated the urgent need for police accountability and drew the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to launch a pattern or practice investigation of BPD. DOJ's 2017 investigation of BPD found stark racial disparities in the Department's stops, searches, arrests, and uses of force,¹¹ likewise establishing the overdue necessity of immediate corrective action. Following DOJ's investigation, a federal consent decree was agreed to and is still in effect six years later. The Court recently found BPD to be in full and effective compliance of the Transportation and Officer Assistance and Support portions of the consent decree; after achieving sustained compliance for at least one year, BPD can be released from those provisions of the consent decree. Nevertheless, reaction from community members to the Court's finding suggests there is much more work to be done: "We remain weary about the progress made on other central provisions of the consent decree like stops, searches, and arrests; use of force; and youth interactions. Lack of progress in these areas contributes to the culture that leaves residents feeling as distrustful of the Baltimore Police Department as they did in 2015 when Mr. Gray was killed."¹² The transfer of oversight authority of BPD to the Baltimore City Council is vital to ensure that the people of Baltimore have access to and a greater voice in the kinds of accountability measures that BPD ultimately adopts pursuant to the remaining portions of the consent decree.

To be sure, measures to reform BPD's policies are underway, as mandated by the federal consent decree, and community engagement is one of the centerpiece reforms that is required. Specifically, Baltimore City and BPD are required to "develop and implement community-engagement plans for creating opportunities for routine and frequent positive interactions between officers and community members, including those critical of BPD."¹³ Some requirements of these community-engagement plans include "outreach in all neighborhoods, including neighborhoods where no neighborhood association has been established to provide consultation and input to BPD"¹⁴ and "collaborat[ion][, where feasible, with neighborhood mediations in Baltimore that promote lasting resolutions of appropriately selected disputes among community members to reduce police involvement in these disputes."¹⁵ Once control of BPD is transferred to Baltimore City Council, the City Council will be able to play a greater role

¹⁰ AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF MARYLAND, CHASING JUSTICE: ADDRESSING POLICE VIOLENCE AND CORRUPTION IN MARYLAND, 15, (Jan. 2019), <https://www.aclu-md.org/en/publications/chasing-justice-addressing-police-violence-and-corruption-maryland>.

¹¹ *Investigation of the Baltimore City Police Department*, U.S. Dept. of Justice Civil Rights Div. (Aug. 10, 2016), https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59db8644e45a7c08738ca2f1/t/59db9c97cd39c33ffea89afe/1507564699528/bpd_findings_8-10-16.pdf.

¹² Campaign for Justice, Safety & Jobs, *Reaction to the move to terminate provisions of DOJ's consent decree with BPD* (Feb 6, 2024) <https://www.facebook.com/justicesafetyandjobs/>

¹³ Consent Decree, *United States of America v. Police Department of Baltimore City, et. al*, ¶ 19 <https://www.justice.gov/crt/case-document/file/925036/download>.

¹⁴ *Id.* at ¶ 19(f).

¹⁵ *Id.* at ¶ 19(g).

in facilitating community engagement, so BPD may hear from all residents, as the City, DOJ, and the monitoring team continue to push BPD closer to substantial compliance with all of the terms of the consent decree.

II. The Baltimore City Senate Delegation Must Pass SB 894 to Transfer Control of BPD to Baltimore Pursuant to the Will of the People.

For decades, Baltimore residents have sought oversight of BPD. Baltimore's Civilian Review board was established in 1999, long before many other municipalities in Maryland established similar, yet less authoritative, police accountability boards through statewide legislation in 2021.¹⁶ In 2021, the Maryland General Assembly also enacted legislation to transfer control of BPD to Baltimore City if Baltimore residents voted in favor of the measure.¹⁷ In 2022, Baltimore residents overwhelmingly voted in favor of transferring control of BPD to Baltimore City.¹⁸ Of the 130,000 Baltimore residents who voted, over 82% supported ratification of the charter amendment that transferred BPD from state control to a city agency.¹⁹

Though the Maryland General Assembly's work to advance Baltimore City Council's local control of BPD remains undone, in 2023, we were encouraged by the representation of City and City Councils officials, that supported the city ordinances, that will effectuate local control of BPD. Now that the Baltimore City Council, informed by the work of the Local Control Advisory Board, has established the scope of the powers and duties of BPD and streamlined local laws governing essential BPD structures, hiring policies, and processes, we hope Maryland General Assembly Members will eagerly support SB 894 and HB 732. We thus urge this committee to work expeditiously and collaboratively to pass SB 894 and bring Baltimore City residents one step closer to local control of BPD.

In sum, we strongly urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to support and make every effort to pass SB 894, to advance this long-sought change. While state legislatures²⁰ and even the U.S. Congress²¹ have sought to disempower plurality Black cities, the Maryland General Assembly has a chance to buck this wrongheaded trend and empower Baltimore residents to

¹⁶ Fern Shen, *Civilian Review Board Bill Aims to Protect Key Powers Needed to Hold BPD Accountable*, BALT. BREW, (Feb. 16, 2022) <https://www.baltimorebrew.com/2022/02/16/civilian-review-board-bill-aims-to-protect-key-powers-needed-to-hold-bpd-accountable/>.

¹⁷ See S.B. 786, 444th Leg., Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 – Baltimore City – Control of the Police Department of Baltimore City (Md. 2021), https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2021RS/chapters_noln/Ch_133_sb0786E.pdf.

¹⁸ Official 2022 Gubernatorial General Election Results for Baltimore City (last accessed Feb. 17, 2023) https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2022/general_results/gen_qresults_2022_by_county_3.html.

¹⁹ *Id.*

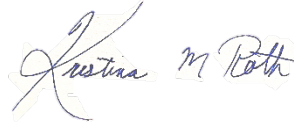
²⁰ SANDHYA KAJEEPETA, LDF'S THURGOOD MARSHALL INSTITUTE, WHEN THE STATE TAKES OVER: HOW STATE OFFICIALS USURPING LOCAL CONTROL THREATENS LOCAL BLACK POLITICAL POWER, (Feb. 2024), <https://tminstituteldf.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/When-the-state-takes-over.pdf>.

²¹ Press Release, LDF Urges President Biden to Veto Resolution to Strike Down Washington D.C.'s Police Reform Act, Express Disappointment at Veto of Revised Criminal Code (Mar. 28, 2023), <https://www.naacpldf.org/press-release/ldf-urges-president-biden-to-veto-resolution-to-strike-down-washington-d-c-s-policing-reform-act-expresses-disappointment-at-veto-of-revised-criminal-code/>.

regain local control of BPD through the Baltimore City Council.

Thank you for considering our testimony. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at kroth@naacpldf.org.

Sincerely yours,



Kristina Roth
Senior Policy Associate

Jin Hee Lee
Director, Department of Strategic
Initiatives

SB894 Local control.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Lindsay Keipper

Position: FAV

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs. I am a resident of **District 46 and I am testifying in support of SB894.**

I am writing today to express my strong support for SB894, which would grant Baltimore City the authority to oversee and govern its own police department.

Unfortunately, under the current system, our police department is managed by the state of Maryland, creating a disconnect between those who enforce the law and those who live under it. Without the authority to oversee and govern our police department, accountability remains elusive. We demand transparency and accountability from those who enforce the law, and local control is the key to ensuring that our voices are heard and our concerns are addressed.

Decisions about policing in Baltimore City should be made by those who understand our community's dynamics and are directly accountable to its residents. Local control empowers us to swiftly implement tailored strategies to combat crime, improve community relations, and foster trust in law enforcement. This lack of local control means that critical decisions about policing in our city are being made by people who don't know Baltimore and, quite frankly, don't care about Baltimore. Their decisions are driven by broader state-level considerations rather than the specific needs and concerns of our neighborhoods.

This legislation represents the final and urgent step towards securing the autonomy necessary for Baltimore City to effectively govern its own police department. Baltimore has amended its charter and passed enabling legislation; we stand ready to assume full responsibility for the Baltimore City Police Department.

It's time to put the power back where it belongs—in the hands of those who know and care about Baltimore. Supporting HB732 is not just about completing a process—it's about reclaiming our voice, our safety, and our future.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB894.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Keipper

2425 Fleet St.

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore



Showing Up for Racial Justice

SB894 - BCHD - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FAV



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

March 5, 2024

TO: The Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Baltimore City Administration

RE: Senate Bill 894 - Baltimore City – Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Smith and Vice Chair Waldstriecker, and Members of the please, be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) supports Senate Bill (SB) 894.

SB 894 repeals a prohibition on certain Baltimore City ordinances or acts of certain municipal officials from conflicting, impeding, obstructing, hindering, or interfering with the powers of the Baltimore City Police Commissioner; and generally relating to the Baltimore City Police Commissioner. It specifically deletes the last provision of Article II, Section 27 of the Charter of Baltimore City. There is a long history of the jurisdiction and control of the Baltimore Police Department (“BPD” or “The Department”). The BPD initially was established as an instrumentality of the City of Baltimore. However, by the 1850s, the “Know-Nothing Party” took political control of Baltimore City, opposing the pro-slavery Democratic party, and stacking the Department with loyal followers. Following bloody elections in 1856 which saw police officers involved in the violence, the State of Maryland then seized control of the Baltimore Police Department in 1860 in an effort to stem further violence and corruption.

For more than 160 years, the State has maintained control over BPD. There were several efforts over the ensuing decades to restore control of its police department back to the City of Baltimore, much like every other jurisdiction in the State. While those efforts were unsuccessful, in 1976, the General Assembly returned the Mayor’s power to appoint the Police Commissioner while simultaneously keeping the Department as an instrumentality of the State. While the Office of the Mayor exercised a large amount of discretion and control over the BPD after this change, efforts to legislate, and at times even conduct proper oversight, by the City Council were stymied by the BPD’s status as an instrumentality of the State. Subsequently, in the 2021 General Assembly Session, Mayor Brandon Scott pushed legislation that was sponsored by Senator Cory McCray and Delegate Melissa Wells that returned control of the BPD back locally to the City of Baltimore. The legislation made local control contingent upon passage of amendment to the City Charter that was ratified by the voters as well as established the Local Control Advisory Board (LCAB).

The LCAB ultimately recommended language for the Charter Amendment that became “Question H” on the November 8, 2022 ballot. The ballot measure passed overwhelmingly with 82.76% of the voters voting in favor of the amendment. While the BPD is now officially an instrumentality of the City, addressing the language of

Article II, Section 27 of the City Charter represents the final step and culmination of the work that has been going on for more than a century.

During late Spring through Summer of 2023, the LCAB met to determine how best to codify the Baltimore Police Department within the Baltimore City Code as well as the Baltimore City Charter. The LCAB discussed what was deemed to be proper and improper Charter material based on the advice of the Baltimore City Department of Law. In the Fall of 2023, two pieces of legislation were introduced to the City Council by Councilman Mark Conway on behalf of the Administration as a result of the efforts of the LCAB – Council Bill 23-0445, a charter amendment enshrining the Baltimore Police Department into the City’s Charter, and Council Bill 23-0449 which codifies the roles, requirements, and structure of the Baltimore Police Department. On January 24, 2024, Mayor Scott signed both the ordinance and resolution alongside members of the LCAB, City Council, community members and advocates. The Charter resolution will go to the voters of Baltimore City for approval this November.

Given the above actions that have taken place since March 2023, the Baltimore City Administration requests a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 894.

SB894 Local control Testimony Template.pdf

Uploaded by: Rebecca Shillenn

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs. I am a resident of **District 45. I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 894.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

I am here today to express my strong support for HB732, which would grant Baltimore City the authority to oversee and govern its own police department.

Unfortunately, under the current system, Baltimore City's police department is managed by the state of Maryland, creating a disconnect between those who enforce the law and those who live under it. Without the authority to oversee and govern the police department, city residents are unable to truly hold the police accountable. We demand transparency and accountability from those who enforce the law, and local control is the key to ensuring that city residents' voices are heard and their concerns are addressed.

Decisions about policing in Baltimore City should be made by those who understand the community's dynamics and are directly accountable to its residents.

Local control empowers the city to swiftly implement tailored strategies to combat crime, improve community relations, and foster trust in law enforcement. This lack of local control means that critical decisions about policing in Baltimore are being made by people who don't know Baltimore and, quite frankly, don't care about Baltimore. Their decisions are driven by broader state-level considerations rather than the specific needs and concerns of the city's neighborhoods.

This legislation represents the final and urgent step towards securing the autonomy necessary for Baltimore City to effectively govern its own police department. It's time to put the power back where it belongs—in the hands of those who know and care about Baltimore. Supporting HB732 is not just about completing a process—it's about Baltimore's people reclaiming their voice, their safety, and their future.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of Senate Bill 894.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Shillenn

5401 Elsrode Avenue Baltimore MD 21214

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

Eckel FAV SB894 Local control Testimony Template.p

Uploaded by: Rianna Eckel

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee**,

My name is Rianna Eckel, and I'm a resident of the 43rd district. I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs.



Showing Up for Racial Justice

I have been working with CJSJ to gain local control of BPD for years, and canvassed for Question H, the ballot measure to restore local control that passed with 82% of the vote in November or 2022.

From my time at the doors and the polls, as well as the decisive results of Question H, it is abundantly clear that Baltimoreans want control of BPD now. **I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 894.**

I am here today to express my strong support for HB732, which would grant Baltimore City the authority to oversee and govern its own police department.

Unfortunately, under the current system, Baltimore City's police department is managed by the state of Maryland, creating a disconnect between those who enforce the law and those who live under it. Without the authority to oversee and govern the police department, city residents are unable to truly hold the police accountable. We demand transparency and accountability from those who enforce the law, and local control is the key to ensuring that city residents' voices are heard, and their concerns are addressed.

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This legislation represents the final and urgent step towards securing the autonomy necessary for Baltimore City to effectively govern its own police department. It's time to put the power back where it belongs—in the hands of those who know and care about Baltimore. Supporting HB732 is not just about completing a process—it's about Baltimore's people reclaiming their voice, their safety, and their future.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of Senate Bill 894.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Rianna Eckel
2300 Hunter St, Baltimore 21218
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

SB894 Local control_Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Johnson

Position: FAV

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City. We are also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs. I am a resident of District 41. **I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 894.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

I am here today to express my strong support for SB 894, which would grant Baltimore City the authority to oversee and govern its own police department.

Unfortunately, under the current system, Baltimore City's police department is managed by the state of Maryland, creating a disconnect between those who enforce the law and those who live under it. Without the authority to oversee and govern the police department, city residents are unable to truly hold the police accountable. We demand transparency and accountability from those who enforce the law, and local control is the key to ensuring that city residents' voices are heard and their concerns are addressed.

Decisions about policing in Baltimore City should be made by those who understand the community's dynamics and are directly accountable to its residents.

Local control empowers the city to swiftly implement tailored strategies to combat crime, improve community relations, and foster trust in law enforcement. This lack of local control means that critical decisions about policing in Baltimore are being made by people who don't know Baltimore and, quite frankly, don't care about Baltimore. Their decisions are driven by broader state-level considerations rather than the specific needs and concerns of the city's neighborhoods.

This legislation represents the final and urgent step towards securing the autonomy necessary for Baltimore City to effectively govern its own police department. It's time to put the power back where it belongs—in the hands of those who know and care about Baltimore. Supporting SB 894 is not just about completing a process—it's about Baltimore's people reclaiming their voice, their safety, and their future.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of Senate Bill 894.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Johnson
1 Merryman Court
Baltimore, MD 21210
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

SB894_SarahLewitus_FAVORABLE.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Lewitus

Position: FAV

March 3, 2024

Sarah Lewitus

Ednor Gardens, Baltimore City

TESTIMONY ON SB894

Baltimore City - Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner

TO: Senator Will Smith, Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, and the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Sarah Lewitus

My name is Sarah Lewitus and I am a resident of District 14. I am submitting this testimony on SB0894 - Baltimore City - Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner.

I am affiliated with the organizing group Jews United for Justice. As a homeowner, an artist, and a new mother, I feel that it is essential that Baltimore City restore control of the Baltimore Police Department to Baltimore residents so that Baltimore residents can have a voice in the management of health and safety resources in our city.

BPD consistently fails in its mission to “provide for the safety and well-being of all,” as made clear by Baltimore city’s seven-year federal consent decree, because of police abuses. The current system is simply not working. It is time to listen to the people of Baltimore City, who voted overwhelmingly in favor of making the BPD a City agency once more (over 82% of Baltimoreans voted for Question H, the local control ballot measure, in the most recent election).

As a resident of Baltimore City, I should be empowered by the city to have a democratic voice in the control of the Department that purports to be concerned with my safety and well-being.

As an artist, I am confident that the people of Baltimore City can be creative, bold, and brave in imagining how safety and well-being is handled in our city, in ways that we are not enabled to do now, without local control.

And as a new mother raising my child in Baltimore City, I am determined that my child should have the opportunity to grow up in a community that has a direct voice in how safety and well-being is carried out.

The federal consent decree mandated the formation of a Civilian Oversight Task Force to make recommendations to strengthen police accountability and police-community relations. In their

2018 report they state: “The BPD will never be fully accountable to its residents until full control of the department is returned to the city.” They stress the importance of the City Council having legislative power and recommend that this change happen “with all deliberate speed.” It is your duty to listen to the Civilian Oversight Task Force and listen to the people of Baltimore City.

We want the City Council, our local, elected legislators, to have legislative authority to make changes to BPD policy.

To fulfill the will of Baltimoreans, the Maryland General Assembly must immediately restore control of the BPD to Baltimore residents through our local legislature. Further delay is unacceptable. Please advocate for SB0894 in the General Assembly.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
Sarah Lewitus

SB894 Local control Testimony Template.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Theresa Columbus

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs. I am a resident of District 43-A. **I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 894.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

I am here today to express my strong support for HB732, which would grant Baltimore City the authority to oversee and govern its own police department.

Unfortunately, under the current system, Baltimore City's police department is managed by the state of Maryland, creating a disconnect between those who enforce the law and those who live under it. Without the authority to oversee and govern the police department, city residents are unable to truly hold the police accountable. We demand transparency and accountability from those who enforce the law, and local control is the key to ensuring that city residents' voices are heard and their concerns are addressed.

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Local control empowers the city to swiftly implement tailored strategies to combat crime, improve community relations, and foster trust in law enforcement. This lack of local control means that critical decisions about policing in Baltimore are being made by people who don't know Baltimore and, quite frankly, don't care about Baltimore. Their decisions are driven by broader state-level considerations rather than the specific needs and concerns of the city's neighborhoods.

This legislation represents the final and urgent step towards securing the autonomy necessary for Baltimore City to effectively govern its own police department. It's time to put the power back where it belongs—in the hands of those who know and care about Baltimore. Supporting HB732 is not just about completing a process—it's about Baltimore's people reclaiming their voice, their safety, and their future.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of Senate Bill 894.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Theresa Columbus
712 Gorsuch Ave Apt 1
Baltimore, MD 21218

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

SB894 (LC) DITZ Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Toby Ditz

Position: FAV

March 5, 2024
Toby Ditz
Baltimore, 21217

TESTIMONY ON SB894 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Baltimore City-Control over powers of police commissioner

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Toby Ditz

My name is Toby Ditz. I have been a proud Baltimorean for over forty years, and a resident of District 40. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 894.

Since 2017, I have been working on local control as a volunteer with a variety of West Baltimore neighborhood and citywide organizations that advocate on behalf of police and criminal justice reform. I have testified orally at least five times at hearings held by this committee, by your counterpart in the House, and by Baltimore City Council. I have also knocked on doors to educate voters on question H, the local control ballot initiative, in the fall of 2022.

I feel passionately about bringing this long campaign to a successful end, and I am not alone. When I pounded the pavement on behalf of the ballot amendment, I spoke to many Baltimoreans who assumed we already had local control and were astounded to find out that we did not. And most activists were stunned when they then discovered that the overwhelmingly favorable vote for the local control referendum was not enough. On learning last year that we still needed to come back to the state legislature to strike out the now outdated language in Article II, #27 the City Charter, one exasperated volunteer said at a meeting, *“Don’t be polite—tell them [the legislature] we are fed up”* with these delays. Then sadly the legislature got cold feet and the bill stalled in 2023.

But that was yesterday. Today, I am more optimistic that the long battle for local control is almost over. We have surmounted every hurdle imposed on us since 2021. And since last session. City Council, with the support of the Local Control Advisory Board, has now completed the important work of codifying into local city Code key components of MD’s public local laws governing the BPD, and it has drafted the new City Charter ballot amendment that spells out the basic scope and duties of the BPD.

Moreover, the Mayor, the City Council, the Baltimore PD, and advocates are now fully united in strong support of SB894. The state’s attorney general’s opinion has also stated that we need the change in the City Charter’s Article II to eliminate ambiguities in Baltimore City Council's capacity to legislate for the Baltimore.

The important thing now is not to falter. We have done our part. It is now up to each and every one of you to deliver at last on the promise you made in 2021 to Baltimoreans to restore the City's powers over the BPD. And you must do it without further hurdles, contingencies or equivocation. Surely it is long past time to grant us, the residents of the great majority Black City of Baltimore, the same powers of local self-governance that you give other Marylanders.

Please report favorably on SB894.

SB0894 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Jill Carter

Position: FWA



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of SB0894 - Baltimore City - Control Over Powers of Police
Commissioner
Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee
On March 5th 2024

Mr. Chairman, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Senate Bill 0894 repeals the exception made for the Baltimore Police Commissioner when it comes to the extent of legislative oversight in the city of Baltimore. Currently, the Baltimore City Charter states that the Baltimore Police Department (BPD), under the leadership of the police commissioner, is exempt from legislative oversight by the mayor and city council. This bill repeals that exemption from the city charter, giving the council the power to implement much needed reforms within the BPD.

For more than a decade, advocates have been trying to get this line removed from the charter to give the Baltimore City Council (BCC) legislative authority over the BPD. In 2021, the General Assembly passed legislation to reestablish the BPD as a City Agency, provided that Baltimore residents ratify an amendment making it so in the City Charter, which would give the City Council and Mayor's Office authority over the Department.

In November 2022, Baltimore residents overwhelmingly voted in favor of making the BPD a City Agency, with over 82% of 132,000 responses voting for the ballot measure. As of January of last year, the BPD is now considered a city agency, but because of this line in the City Charter, the BCC is still powerless to implement much needed reforms into the BPD.

The passing of the federal consent decree mandated the formation of the Civilian Oversight Task Force (COTF) to make recommendations for police accountability measures and to strengthen police-community relations. In its 2018 report, the COTF urged that the BPD be placed back under city control stating, “The BPD will never be fully accountable to its residents until full control of the department is returned to the city”. Throughout its report, the COTF stressed the importance of the Council having legislative power and recommended that such change happen “with all deliberate speed”.

To give the Council the power to make these changes, this legislative body must make one last change in the City Charter to enable local control, by passing SB0894 to remove the one line in the charter that prohibits the BCC from infringing on the power of the Police Commissioner.

As such, I urge this committee to issue a favorable report on SB0894 and implement the will of the citizens of Baltimore, as clearly expressed in the 2022 ballot measure vote, and restore full legislative authority over the BPD to the BCC.

Respectfully,

Jill P. Carter

